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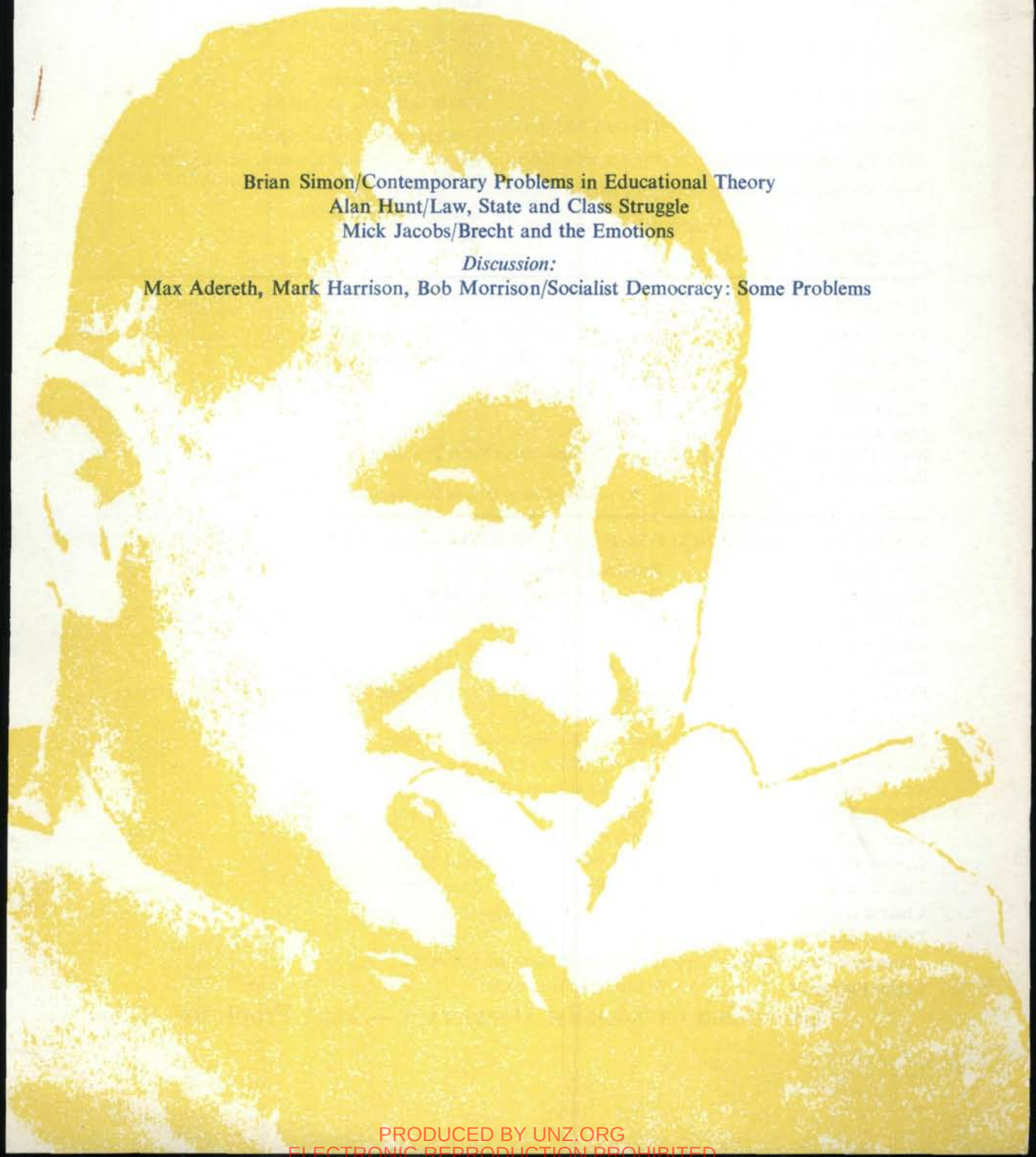

Brian Simon/Contemporary Problems in Educational Theory
Alan Hunt/Law, State and Class Struggle
Mick Jacobs/Brecht and the Emotions

Discussion:
Max Adereth, Mark Harrison, Bob Morrison/Socialist Democracy: Some Problems

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Marxism Today

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Discussion on Socialist Democracy—Some Problems

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Contemporary Problems in Educational Theory

Brian Simon

(The author is Professor of Education at the University of Leicester and a member of the Cultural Committee of the Communist Party. He is author of "Intelligence, Psychology and Education: a Marxist Critique" (recently published in paperback) and other books on education. He is also joint editor of the independent educational journal "Forum for the Discussion of New Trends in Education". His article is based on a lecture given at the week of Marxist Discussion in September 1975.)

While it is certainly the case that Marx himself wrote little more than a few short passages directly bearing on education—its structure, processes and general character—there is no question that the Marxist approach is very relevant to analysis of a wide range of educational issues; indeed there are no important educational problems that cannot be tackled from the standpoint of Marxism.

There are today very many controversial issues in the area of educational theory and practice that urgently require attention, but have, unfortunately, been neglected by Marxists. The result is a tendency to confusion and disarray among left/progressive forces. This is inevitable, given that no clear lead has been forthcoming, grounded in a rational analysis of current theoretical issues based on Marxism. Partly for this reason the Black Papers, for instance, and like phenomena can make a considerable impact.

Challenges of this kind must be more effectively met in the future, and it is not as if there is not an arsenal of weapons on which Marxists can draw in making a critical assessment of contemporary trends and developments. The objective must be to define more precisely both short-term and long-term objectives; to clarify the issues at stake, and to define a theoretical standpoint which can act as a guide to practice. It is to assist in this process, and, hopefully, to stimulate a wide-ranging discussion, that this paper is offered.

An Area of Class Struggle

Education is best seen, in my view, as an area of class struggle where opposing objectives meet. Though established through the medium of (or by) the state, the educational system cannot be equated with the armed forces, police, judicature, as an oppressive weapon of the state, even though it certainly contains such an element. But the organised labour movement fought for universal compulsory education, and, once established, has sought consistently to transform it—to render it more democratic, more open, more appropriate to the aspirations of working people. This is the sense in which education embodies opposing objectives.

Hence, in a capitalist society, conflicts necessarily arise within education itself. For instance, the organised labour movement, expressing the interests of the working class, sees education (and has done so historically) as one means, if auxiliary, of economic and political emancipation; while the bourgeoisie see it now and have seen it in the past primarily as a means of social control—as a means by which the masses are brought to assimilate the ideology of capitalism, and of 'appropriate' norms of behaviour. These attitudes clearly reflect quite opposite intentions.

Again, the labour movement and its allies see education as formative—as the means by which the younger generation may develop their personality, abilities, skills—their potential. In practice, however, the system operates as a selective,

To our readers

We shall continue with Editorial Comments as usual in our July issue. They were held over in this issue due to heavy pressure on our limited space from articles which we wished to make available and from discussion contributions on *Socialist Democracy—Some Problems*

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winnowing device, distributing life chances, allowing a strictly controlled degree of social mobility, fitting the new generation into the existing occupational structure, or ensuring the reproduction of social relations.

Most of the important contemporary issues in education arise from contradictions of this fundamental kind, involving different conceptions as to the nature and purpose of education. It is not surprising, in view of the basic conflict of interest embodied in the system, that very many controversial questions emerge, both as regards the theory and the practice of education, at all levels, since this fundamental conflict expresses itself in many different forms.

Close Links with Economic and Social Conditions

In the existing crisis of capitalism all such contradictions are sharpened, become more specific, since education is closely linked with economic and political conditions generally. For instance, inflation leads inevitably to a fiscal crisis relating to the financing of education. Local authorities claim that they have not got the necessary means to carry on the system now developed, while worse times are threatened. Local initiative and democratic control are today being weakened partly by local government reorganisation—resulting, in many areas, in a direct threat to the maintenance of local educational systems (through increased bureaucracy together with imposition of the resources management approach), and partly by the rapid growth of the centralised state bureaucracy now clearly bidding for direct control over education. This has recently been brutally indicated in the Department of Education and Science's policy concerning colleges of education and higher education generally.

Contemporary financial pressures coincide with a certain disillusion as regards education's potential for solving some of the sharpest, and most sensitive, problems of bourgeois society. This is the case in the United States in particular, where great hopes were placed on education as a palliative for social discontent. Today it is more common there to speak now of the crisis in education, resulting from urbanisation, racial conflict and poverty. Widely publicised enquiries like the Coleman Report and the Jencks survey entitled *Inequality* feed this disillusion. On the basis of massive correlation studies, these conclude that 'Schools make no difference'—a very convenient conclusion for those wishing both to cut public expenditure and to put a brake on educational advance.

Here, incidentally, we see another effect of positivist social science, which reaches conclusions about the nature and role of education and its potentialities by looking only at data derived from the existing situation, ignoring its historical development, the nature of monopoly capitalism, and any assessment of the role education can and does play in different socio-economic formations and at moments of fundamental social change. It is significant that Crosland recently, in announcing restricted resources for education through the rate support grant, based his rationalisation for this policy specifically on Jencks's 'radical' report.

Comprehensive Secondary Education

The leading ideological or theoretical issues today are all related to the great perennial questions in education, which can be put quite briefly. What should be taught? To whom? How?

These questions pose themselves afresh in each generation, and are now posed in a new situation in this country—that is, in the light of the partially successful move to comprehensive secondary education. In spite of all the difficulties and problems with which the schools are faced, we should not underestimate the significance of this development. It is a move to an organisational form which *potentially* (or theoretically) allows the *whole population*, without distinction of class, caste, stratum or grade, to be educated together, and experience a common basic education which (again *potentially*) can impart a general, humanistic, formative culture, embracing also the fundamentals of science and technology. To turn this potentiality into actuality must surely be the socialist perspective.

The achievement of comprehensive secondary education throughout the country (involving the absorption, or demise, of the independent schools) would not only mark a victory in itself for the labour and left-progressive forces in general, but is also the necessary organisational form for the further transformation of education. In particular, it would mark the demise of the functionally organised school system, whereby each individual is docketed almost from birth and programmed (or processed) to be turned out again at a given occupational level through the system of streaming and selection. This system was paramount until quite recently, and still persists in some forms.

But here a note of warning. It would be quite wrong to exaggerate the extent of success (at present we are not much more than half-way there), and quite utopian and illusory to think that the new organisational form automatically brings with it a new and transformed content of education, and new procedures, in line with the aspirations of the working class. The transition to comprehensive education has taken place, of course, in a capitalist society, marked by sharp class antagonisms which are certainly reflected in the schools in all sorts of ways. But the history of this move-

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ment shows that the new system itself is in process of evolution, that it is not fixed and static but has undergone important changes.

The first comprehensive schools simply took over the old inner content, in the form of differentiation of pupils through streaming and other divisive measures inside the school. But the tendency towards the unification of the school, and away from the docketing and labelling of pupils, has been slow but continuous. Today a common undifferentiated education (or common core of studies) up to 14 or even 16 is on the order of the day as a practical objective in very many comprehensive schools in the country. Let's be clear that this has been achieved through the struggle of advanced forces—particularly teachers, but with the support of the labour movement and of progressive local authorities, advisers, etc., who have been clear as to their objectives, and that it has been a very considerable achievement, one which can, and must, be taken further.

The development of comprehensive education along these lines, partly because of the perspective this opens up for further development, represents a success by the labour movement and left-progressive forces. There can be no doubt of that. But we begin to understand some of the complexities of the situation when we realise that, in some senses, comprehensive education was a necessity for the survival of capitalism. This was understood by the more far-sighted members of the establishment impressed by evidence produced by sociologists relating to the so-called 'wastage' of human ability under the old, divisive system, which weakened Britain in the inter-imperialist struggle (a standpoint reflected, for instance, in the Crowther report, 1958, and the Robbins report, 1963).

While in this sense a necessity for the survival of capitalism, comprehensive education at the same time represents a threat, and potentially a very considerable one, to long-established procedures, vested interests, privileges of the ruling class and their dependants. Hence the resistance to its further development, which becomes sharper the more firmly it is established, and the more its potentialities are realised. This opposition is expressed in all sorts of ways—in the Black Papers, in books like Wilson's *Education, Equality and Society* (1975), in Lord James's speeches in the House of Lords, in the Tory Party's 'Save Our Schools' campaign led by St. John Stevas, in the moves to cut educational expenditure and slow the rate of change, in the campaign against comprehensive education waged by the mass media, and so on. At the same time the public education system itself is experiencing the effects of the sharpening economic crisis which expresses itself in the so-called urban crisis, in increasing alienation of the youth from traditional procedures and established (and establishment) values, in the reflection in the schools of racial antagonisms, and so on. Add to this a certain confusion in the schools, understandable enough in the present situation, as to educational objectives and means (sharply focused in the Tyndale enquiry), and it is clear that all is not plain sailing, and that there is an urgent need for clarity and broad agreement among the left-progressive forces as to the way ahead.

Marxist Approaches

It may be worth giving here a general, no doubt crude and oversimplified, answer from the standpoint of Marxism to the three questions raised earlier. What shall be taught, to whom, and how? Briefly we would say that primary and secondary education should impart a general, formative, humanistic culture to be followed by professional (or specialised) preparation—and that this should be imparted to *all*; that is, that all children in an advanced society should experience such an education. *How* should this be done? By grasping and utilising all the resources of modern pedagogy, and I would claim, with Comenius in the 17th century and Jerome Bruner and A. R. Luria today, that we know how to do it.

I will come back to these points later. But it is in relation to these general objectives that ideological (or theoretical) issues arise that Marxists see as important. In general, these are those standpoints which oppose these objectives *either* on the grounds that they are undesirable in themselves, *or* that they are impossible of achievement (so reducing confidence in the task).

Intelligence Testing

We have had experience of one crucially important ideological standpoint that had to be smashed (or, rather, subjected to a sharply critical evaluation) if advance was to be made, and we can learn from that. This was the battle, fought some 20 years ago, about the practice of selection and its ideological justification in the theory and practice of intelligence testing. It was essential to examine this critically both because the practice of intelligence testing was the instrumental means on which the divided, functional system of education was based, and because, at the same time, the theories derived from intelligence testing provided the rationale—or justification—of the selective system, in that it held (and claimed to have proved) that only a small proportion of the population was capable of benefiting from a systematic secondary education. In other words, that the perspective outlined above was simply impossible of achievement.

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The vicious thing about this practice, which claimed a scientific basis, lay not only in its practical utilisation in the school system as the means of streaming and selection, but, even more important, in the way it affected (and determined) the whole approach to the educational enterprise. Teachers (with some exceptions) were convinced that the mass of the children could achieve little, and lowered their sights accordingly. Children themselves assimilated a negative self-image, and this affected their level of aspiration and so their achievement; the theory was used to convince parents of the innate failings of their own children. A whole ethos of failure developed which profoundly affected attitudes to education, and therefore the nature of the process itself. The fight against this theory—or more accurately ideology—was both an ideological and a practical matter, and one that had to be carried through in the schools and classrooms as well as in the study. But it was essential to win it in order to transform the atmosphere, or climate, in which the practice of teaching and educating was carried on—and in order to transform the school system in parallel with establishing a *positive* view as to the potentialities of schooling and education.

Old Arguments Revived

This issue is, of course, still with us; it has raised its head in a different context, that of racialism, in the United States in particular. But the old arguments are being revived in this country also in relation to the schools (as in the last Black Paper, by Burt, Eysenck, Lynn) so that a struggle against them is still necessary. Marxists have played their part in this along with others and must continue to do so. But in the meantime a number of other issues have come into prominence—having (objectively) similar aims: to prevent, or hold back, the implementation of genuine secondary education for all.

First, we may refer briefly to those ideas which can be categorised as the direct expression of bourgeois ideology. These include a set of a priori arguments against extending secondary education to all.

The most recent expression of this standpoint, on a high or abstract level, is Bryan Wilson's *Education, Equality and Society*, a symposium. In his introduction, Wilson (a sociologist and fellow of All Souls College, Oxford) bewails the rejection of 'categories' which, he says, 'is itself an important element in the contemporary campaign for equality'. Streaming, which 'was an attempt to teach pupils in accordance with their actual differences in ability', is now under attack; 'setting', he adds, 'now suffers the same ideological assault'. Such categorisation, he claims, is offensive to 'egalitarians' who—he now makes a considerable leap, 'wish to destroy the whole social apparatus of order, gradation, status, distinction and categorisation'. There is space here only to give a taste of this kind of conservative philosophising which finishes by attributing to comprehensive education most of the responsibility for what the author refers to as 'the breakdown in discipline', 'the growing problem of truancy', 'the alarming reports of inability to spell . . . ignorance of basic geography, general knowledge', and so on.

This book, incidentally, contains a long exposition from G. M. Bantock as to the necessity for minority culture in a mass society, and hence for an élitist education for the few and a popular ('affective') education for what Bantock calls 'the folk'; and another by the late Cyril Burt representing his well-known views as to social class differentiation of intelligence—remarkable chiefly for the historical rationalisation he produces to explain how it has come about that the middle classes are genetically superior to the working class, as 'proved' by Intelligence Testing. 'Ever since the days of the legendary Dick Whittington,' Burt writes, 'and indeed long before his time, bright and energetic youngsters from the poorest homes have steadily worked their way up to the merchant or professional classes, while the duller and lazier children of the middle or upper classes have tended to drift downward.'

No historian, I believe, would accept this kind of analysis of the historical process required to 'substantiate' the conclusions drawn from Intelligence Testing; this argument is symptomatic of the blind alleys people get themselves into in defending the doctrines of this pseudo-science. However, enough has been said to indicate the type of arguments—philosophical, sociological, psychometric—brought together in the assault on the kind of educational developments now being brought about in the schools. These cover a wide range and deserve stringent criticism from a Marxist standpoint.

Burt, Jensen, Eysenck, etc., present a set of ideas to the effect that the mass of the children are not capable of benefiting from a systematic secondary education due to hereditary disadvantage. As Marxists we reject this thesis, and have made our opposition to it absolutely clear. But I would like to make equally clear that Marxism also rejects the parallel but seemingly opposite argument that it is not heredity, but *environmental disadvantage*, which also has this effect. This standpoint claims, in effect, that the mass of working-class children are so disadvantaged by the nature of their family life as to be incapable of abstract, conceptual thought, and therefore of systematic education.

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Theory of Linguistic Deprivation

The argument here is based on the theory of linguistic deprivation, and derives initially (paradoxically) from A. R. Luria's pioneering work on the relation between language and cognitive (or intellectual) development generally—though Luria would certainly not go along with the development of his ideas in this direction. The theory, as so developed, is, of course, highly speculative. Linguistic deprivation is advanced as the reason why working-class children 'fail' when confronted with the demands and rigours of an academic curriculum. Thus this argument also, and this is typical of all such standpoints, finds the cause of failure within the children themselves, or their families, rather than in the circumstances of a class-divided society with its attendant housing, health and innumerable other problems, all of which can only be solved by social action on a massive scale.

Environmental determinism (for such is the position) can be as vicious as hereditarian determinism, and is equally unacceptable on rational grounds, perhaps in particular to Marxists. The conception, basic to Intelligence Testing theory, that the child's development is the simple product of the interaction of two 'factors', *heredity* on the one hand, and a supposed unchanging *environment* on the other, is essentially metaphysical. In this theory, the category 'environment' is seen as comprising the total environment of the child as a kind of global entity, including family, conditions of life, schooling, and so on, which is seen as external to the child and which operates on him—to which he is passively subject. When Burt/Jensen, etc., futilely claim that the variation in children's intelligence is determined 80 per cent by heredity and 20 per cent by 'environment', this is the sense in which they are using the term.

Marxism utterly rejects this metaphysical approach. The matter is far more complex than this, as I shall hope (briefly) to show towards the end of this paper. But it is relevant here to remind ourselves that the Marxist approach to child development places the main emphasis on the child's active relationship with adults, other children, the school, and with the other phenomena, both natural and artificial, surrounding him, through which process of activity the child's specific abilities, skills, habits, speech and behaviour generally are formed. Burt used to claim that the theory of the primacy of 'intelligence' as a factor of the mind lent support to the idealist philosophical outlook, and he is right. The environmentalist approach, which reaches its apotheosis in Skinnerian behaviourism, is a modern expression of our old friend mechanical materialism. The two, as Marx showed, are opposite sides to the same coin. What both ignore, or fail to grasp, is *dialectics*—the very possibility of movement and change; the interconnection, or interpenetration, of subject and object which lies at the heart of education.

Relativist Positions

How does the argument proceed, and why is it important for us? Children, it is claimed, who are linguistically—or educationally—deprived require (in their own best interests, of course) a special, *differentiated* educational content, or forms of educational activity. It is here that we meet with a wide variety of ideological standpoints which deny the desirability—or even the possibility—of providing common, basic educational experiences for all children, and which lead, objectively, to differentiation and back to divisiveness in education.

All sorts of ingenious theories are utilised to support this position—some of them dressed up as 'radical', even revolutionary nostrums. The spectrum ranges from the arguments for special 'community based' curricula for EPA (Education Priority Area) children, advanced on the grounds that the specific features characterising EPAs—poverty, overcrowding, congestion, lack of cultural or other amenities—are with us for ever, so that children must be enured to cope with the situation, to the overtly sophisticated relativism of what is defined as 'new direction' sociology. This latter advances an unbelievably a-historical (and entirely speculative) theory as to how 'high status' curriculum and subject matter becomes so defined, and enshrined in the school curriculum (as a result of battles for status and 'legitimacy' between competing groups), and 'legitimises' (to use their term) the conclusion that any curriculum is 'as good as' another; that the knowledge man has accumulated over the last two to three thousand years and more is 'bourgeois knowledge' and therefore by definition alienating to the working class—more particularly if conveyed by teachers who are themselves, again by definition, middle class.

The 'radical' nature of this relativist ideological position, and the danger of taking it seriously, is shown in practice by those young teachers who, accepting this view of knowledge, and in their sentimental generosity identifying with their working-class pupils, begin to see their role as one of shielding them from the demands of formal schooling, and acting more the role of social worker (imbued sometimes with a smattering of 'dynamic psychology') rather than as teacher, with the specific function of inducting their pupils into the knowledge, skills and abilities that derive from the objectives of an all-round, humanist education appropriate to the mid-late 20th century. The dangers of this approach are evident; its relativist position in relation to knowledge (in the last resort

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a solipsist standpoint) provides a new ideological means of denying to the working class access to knowledge, culture and science.

Libertarian/Anarchist Attitudes

Linked with these approaches, in some senses, are a whole set of what might be called libertarian/anarchist ideas or ideological positions which deny the need for structure, purpose, direction, or any kind of authority in education; usually basing themselves theoretically on an idealist position (in the philosophic sense) as to the nature of the child and the potentiality of his inner, spontaneous, 'natural' development. Unfortunately there is not space here to enter into a critique of this position —though it should certainly be undertaken from a Marxist standpoint. The importance of such theories in the context of this paper is, of course, that they deny the desirability of a common educational experience, stressing what is unique and so what differentiates every individual rather than what human beings have in common. These ideas tie in with the de-schooling movement associated with the names of Ivan Illitch and Everett Reimer, which derives its main ideological basis and its general ideas from the American anarchist/educationist Paul Goodman.[1] Proponents of these views naturally find it difficult to work within the state system of education and form the spearhead of the so-called 'alternative' school movement both in the United States and in Britain—a largely middle class inspired movement; or, with Illitch, devote their energies to the attempt to destroy the system of education holding that, if achieved, a joyous and convivial Utopia will supersede the technocratic, monopoly dominated, consumer society.

This is not the place to enter into a critique of the kind of historical and social analysis put forward by Illitch, Reimer and others to support and justify their standpoint. Everett Reimer's position seems to stand in the tradition of American petty bourgeois radicalism. Far from presenting any kind of threat to the established order, in terms of the dominance of monopoly capital, the objective function of these ideas is rather, through the use of 'radical' and even 'revolutionary' formulations, to divert attention from the main issues and points of attack, and, in the social analysis offered, to confuse and obscure.

It is to be hoped that these writings will be subjected to a Marxist critique, as they have had a certain influence in Britain; even if Reimer himself modestly disclaims the value of his analysis. 'Even Illitch may diagree with parts of it', he writes, towards the end of his well-known book *School is Dead*. 'By the time it is published it is quite likely that I will too.' He adds that since writing these words in his first draft, four chapters have been jettisoned and eight new ones added, but even so 'the sentence stands'. This hardly gives confidence in the whole enterprise—and indeed a lot of the book appears as the product of 'instant thought'.

Insofar as this whole movement, which may be characterised as anarchist/libertarian, represents a reaction (if an exaggerated one) from the hierarchical and rigid educational structures of the past (and present) and from the passive approach to learning symptomatic of the old type grammar school, it can be said to have positive elements which Marxists, with our stress on human activity as formative, should recognise. But objectively this standpoint, particularly that of de-schooling, undermines confidence in the school system, and particularly in the value of attempts to transform this system through, for instance, the development of comprehensive education, the abolition of streaming, and the evolution of humane and educationally justifiable pedagogic means. Such efforts to transform the school are written off as mere attempts to preserve the existing system which ought to be destroyed.

De-Schooling

It is perhaps worth noting that the de-schooling/anarchist literature, which burst on the British scene in a co-ordinated and massively popular form three or four years ago, was largely produced by Penguin Education, a subsidiary of Pearson/IPC, with an ex-Tory Minister of Education (Boyle) as a member of the Editorial Board.

This prompts the thought that whereas universal compulsory education was finally accepted as being in the interests of the ruling class in the late 19th century, we may now be entering a phase where it is no longer so evidently so, so that attempts to destroy, or, better, perhaps, to emasculate the system may now have high-level support. True, the government has recently raised the school-leaving age, but there have been many signs of lack of enthusiasm. This is particularly the case in the United States at present where, in many areas, no serious attempt is made to maintain existing laws relating to compulsory education.

While some of the criticisms of existing school practice by this movement are certainly worth taking into account, the solution of destroying the schools in favour of learning 'networks', and

[1] Ivan Illitch, *De-Schooling Society* (1971), *Celebration of Awareness* (1971); Everett Reimer, *School is Dead* (1971); Paul Goodman *Compulsory Miseducation* (1962).

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similar schemes, plays directly into the hands of the modern Geddeses—only too ready to wield the axe—and is clearly in no sense in the interests of the working class. In this situation, I suggest, it must be our function to defend and extend the school system while working for its transformation; and we ought to be quite clear about this.

I have outlined some only of the contemporary ideological issues and given some indication of what I conceive to be a Marxist approach to them. Clearly each and every one of them is worth a detailed analysis and critique, but this cannot be done here. But it may be appropriate to sketch in what I conceive to be a Marxist approach to education and learning (or to some aspects of these), in the hope that this can provide a standpoint, or set of criteria, from which an evaluation can be made of these and other ideological issues in education.

The Content of Education

How do we approach the crucial question of the content of education—what shall be taught? In the first place, I suggest, Marxists reject pluralistic notions—the provision, as a basic principle, of different sorts of curricula for different groups or classes, or for that matter sexes, either when based on some conception of differential needs, or on a functional basis. And certainly Marxists reject the notion that education for the working class must be based on, or be derived from, some kind of specifically working-class or proletarian culture —and the concomitant view, quite widely held, that the knowledge now taught in schools and colleges is necessarily some kind of bourgeois knowledge that must be rejected.

It is worth recalling that Lenin was faced with exactly this problem in relation to the Proletcult movement in the early 1920s—a movement which also rejected science and culture as bourgeois, and nailed its flag to a conception of an independent proletarian culture. This view also rejected entirely the content as well as the methodology of the 'old' school—the pre-revolutionary schools of Tsarist Russia. How did Lenin deal with this question?

Lenin's Views

In his speech on *The Task of the Youth Leagues,* delivered to the YCL Congress in October 1920, Lenin discussed the nature of education in the new Soviet Republic.[2] He stressed two things. First, that it was absolutely right to reject the methods and ethos of the old school—the stress on rote learning, the aridity, the way the school was cut off, isolated, from life. But secondly he stresses again and again in that speech what he sees as the crucial issue—that to be a Communist (and the schools must aim to educate Communists) the student must acquire human knowledge as it has been accumulated in man's long advance from savagery to civilisation. Marx himself, he points out, took his stand on the firm foundation of human knowledge gained under capitalism.

So today young people must assimilate this knowledge, and assimilate it *critically*. 'One can become a Communist', he said, 'only when one enriches one's mind with a knowledge of all the wealth created by mankind' and (he added) when one knows how to apply it. Certainly we must abolish the old school, 'but we must take from it all that mankind has accumulated for the benefit of man'. In place of the old drill methods—which led to hatred of the old school—we must put the ability 'to take for ourselves the sum total of human knowledge'.

In the draft resolution he submitted shortly after this speech to the Central Committee for approval at the Proletcult Congress he carried on the battle:

> 'Marxism won for itself its world-historical significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat by the fact that it did not cast aside the valuable gains of the bourgeois epoch, but on the contrary assimilated and digested all that was valuable in the more than 2,000 years of development of human thought and culture. Further work on this basis and in this direction, inspired by the practical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in its last struggle against all exploitation, can alone be regarded as the development of really proletarian culture.'

The draft resolution goes on to reject 'as theoretically wrong and practically harmful all attempts to invent a special culture'—and to use it as the basis of development and education.

I have cited Lenin at some length because he expresses with his usual incisiveness and clarity what I take to be the Marxist viewpoint, and because it is closely relevant to contemporary issues and arguments. Lenin was concerned with the kind of education required to build a socialist society having communism as its aim. That is not, of course, our position in Britain at the moment; we are still engaged in the struggle to bring about the transition to socialism. All the more necessary, then, to fight to make available to the working class—even under capitalism—the sum total of human knowledge in Lenin's sense, since this must necessarily be the foundation for all effective social and political action.

[2] *Selected Works,* Vol. 9, pp. 467-83.

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Ideological Components of Knowledge

Of course, this kind of statement does not finally solve the problem of the content of education—at primary or secondary level; it provides the guidelines within which the solution may be found. There is still the difficult problem of selecting its basic content, of establishing the interrelations between different aspects, and of arranging its structure in terms of levels or stages in the development of the child. There is also the crucially important question of identifying and separating the specifically *ideological* components of knowledge from what, for brevity, may be called knowledge itself. Such components play a key role from the standpoint of assimilating the new generations to capitalist ideology, of gaining, through the process of education, the consent of the governed—of habituating people to the status quo.

Such ideological components (in the sense of distortion through bourgeois ideology) are particularly prevalent in the social sciences as we have seen, for instance, in the case of Intelligence Testing. This is precisely what Lenin meant when he stressed the need to assimilate this knowledge *critically*, and there is a lot of work to be done in this field. Here we may usefully refer to the Communist Party student publication *Breaking the Barriers*, which is concerned specifically with this aspect of the content of education—and makes an initial analysis of the way bourgeois ideology penetrates the various subjects with the aim of winning acceptance of the existing social framework, of the power relations between classes in production, and in capitalist society as a whole. But it is worth repeating that the principle on which the content of education should be established, as enunciated by Lenin, is clear—and it is one that is very relevant to contemporary controversies on this topic in Britain today.

Gramsci on Education

Another leading Marxist who was deeply concerned with the nature of education and its role was the Italian leader, Antonio Gramsci, whose notes 'On Education' in *Prison Notebooks* are well worth studying.[3] The common school, he says, has the entire function of educating and forming new generations; the aim of the primary school is to develop what he calls a 'dynamic conformism' (assimilation of co-operative forms of social behaviour (?))—and of the school system generally to prepare the student as an autonomous, creative, responsible person. His objective is what he calls the 'creative school'—organised as a collective, and developing the 'capacity for intellectual and practical creativity, and of autonomy of orientation and initiative'. (It may be supposed, incidentally, that Gramsci is speculating here on the nature of education and schooling in a socialist society.)

Gramsci saw education as a collective, participatory process—in some senses as a transaction between teacher and taught; he refers to the need for 'the truly active participation' of the pupil in school. The relation between teacher and pupil is seen as active and reciprocal so that every teacher is also a pupil and every pupil a teacher. This difficult but, in my view, stimulating and rewarding concept of the nature of the educational process is derived by Gramsci from that central kernel of Marx's thinking, the *Theses on Feuerbach*, and particularly that where Marx is concerned with the dialectics of human change—'the educator must be educated'.

Gramsci stressed the importance of activity in education; nevertheless, quite correctly, in my view, though sympathetic to their endeavours he took issue with some aspects of the 'progressive' theorists of his day. Thus, criticising one of the exponents of the theory that teachers cannot predetermine 'from outside' the development of the 'spiritual activity' of the child, Gramsci wrote:[4]

> 'It is believed that a child's mind is like a ball of string which the teacher helps to unwind. In reality each generation educates the new generation, i.e. forms it, and education is a struggle against instincts linked to the elementary biological functions, a struggle against nature, to dominate it and create the "contemporary" man of the epoch.'

Again, stressing the active nature of the common school, Gramsci wrote: 'The entire common school is an active school, though it is necessary to place limits on libertarian ideologies in this field and to stress with some energy the duty of the adult generations to "mould" the new generations.' (Unfashionable, perhaps, but surely correct, B. S.) Finally, in a perceptive paragraph, Gramsci states that 'the active school is still in its romantic phase, in which elements of struggle against the mechanical and Jesuitical school have become unhealthily exaggerated—through a desire to distinguish themselves sharply from the latter, and for political reasons. It is necessary,' he adds, 'to enter the "classical", rational phase, and to find in the ends to be attained the natural source for developing the appropriate methods and forms.' This para-

[3] Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (eds.), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (1971), pp. 26-43.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 103, n94.

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graph is, in my view, well worth pondering, since it is in that exercise, I suggest, that the left-progressive forces are now engaged in this country.

Like Lenin, Gramsci was sharply critical of what he also called 'the old school'. But he also denied that education should be based on a so-called specifically working-class culture. Both wanted to take what was best—what was essential—from the old school and to transform it, maintaining rigorous levels of study and achievement (Gramsci particularly warned against the temptation to let things slip with the wide extension of education). Teachers, who inevitably belonged to the middle strata, had the difficult and responsible task of inducting working-class children into knowledge, science and culture. Gramsci placed immense emphasis on their role, holding that the transformation of education, along these lines, was as much a matter of persons, of the teachers and who they were, and of the whole social complex, as of new curricula and methods—that is, of programmes and blueprints.

Marxism and Educability

Finally, are these perspectives viable? Can we conceive of mass education for everyone—on this sort of level?

Obviously, not immediately—nor tomorrow, but in the long run, and finally under socialism—and through the transition to communism—yes. The fact that we live in a capitalist society does not mean that we should not fight for the humanist transformation of the school along these lines—indeed it renders it all the more urgent. The fight for comprehensive education, for the unification of the school, for participatory means of control, for clarification as regards the content of education, methodology and general ethos—all this is a start at least, and one of some significance in relation to this perspective—even if it is still necessary to find appropriate forms for such an education. And it is precisely in this area that intensive discussion among Marxists and others is necessary.

But, it is argued, the mass of the children are not capable of the levels of knowledge, skills, abilities, culture, that you predicate.

It is precisely here that Marxism should give confidence. Marxism stresses the educability of the normal child—the possibility, indeed inevitability of change, movement and development. It rejects the idea that the child is fatally conditioned by heredity or the so-called environment. This does not mean that Marxists hold that all children are equal, that there are no differences in the structure of the brain and higher nervous system at birth. Of course there are. The Marxist stand is that these anatomical-physiological peculiarities *condition*, but do not *determine* the child's development. That development is determined, rather, by the nature and form of the child's *activity*—in the home, at the school, and elsewhere.

The child is in no sense the passive subject of external stimuli. It is in his active interpenetration with his environment that specific characteristics are formed. Marxism sees the child's development as a matter of historical formation in the process of his education and upbringing. No child is born with given abilities or skills—only with the prerequisites of their formation. In school this formation is a matter of systematic intervention—the school, and the teacher, has the responsibility of creating the optimum conditions in which this formation can take place. Education, therefore, is a process of active formation, and is seen as such by Marxists.

Fight for Education and for Socialism

Mankind differs from the rest of the animal world primarily through the development of language, of speech, with its power of abstraction and generalisation. In his communication with adults through the use of language man (unlike the rest of the animal world which can only learn through the formation of conditional reflexes) is able potentially to grasp, assimilate, and finally appropriate that sum of knowledge to which Lenin referred.

Of course there are all sorts of difficulties in the way, both theoretical and practical—if we are thinking in terms of finding the correct educational procedures; more important, there are plenty of economic and political difficulties which must be overcome, while for the practising teacher in the classroom an immense variety of day-to-day problems and difficulties have to be faced and overcome. It is clearly essential to find new forms for education—new solutions; to develop new types of pupil-teacher relations which will help to encourage and release the energies of the students; to learn how to use the familiar local environment of the child and its culture to induct him into universal aspects of knowledge, science and culture itself; to find the correct balance between flexibility and structure allowing both for the child's independent activity and the guidance necessary to facilitate and optimise learning. These are certainly crucial questions, and there are many more. But I suggest that the concept of mass, systematic, high-level education for all is not a pipe-dream. It is a conception that Marxists should hold firmly before them and attempt to realise, in spite of all the difficulties, even if its full achievement is possible only under socialism. In this sense the fight for education can be seen as an integral and crucially important aspect of the struggle for socialism.

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Problems of the State:

Law, State and Class Struggle

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I. INTRODUCTION

This article sets out to examine the way in which law operates to maintain class domination. The argument that is developed shows that law should not simply be regarded as part of the coercive armoury of the state; but also must be understood as making a major contribution to what will be called 'ideological domination'. Ideological domination consists of those processes which produce and reaffirm the existing social order and thereby legitimise class domination. The processes involved in creating and reproducing ideological domination play a major part in ensuring the continuation of capitalist social relations.

There has been relatively little attention paid by Marxists to law. This absence of discussion has resulted in a tendency for the more obvious repressive characteristics to be stressed; and as a consequence the more pervasive contribution of law to the maintenance of capitalist society has not been sufficiently explored. The analysis of law in this wider context is of considerable political importance. Marxists are increasingly being forced to come to grips with the fact that modern capitalism has exhibited very considerable 'staying power'. In the period since the Second World War capitalism in Western Europe has shown what may be best described as relative stability; that is to suggest that despite the occurrence of very deep economic, social and political crises the capitalist social order in the major Western European states has survived substantially intact. This article is concerned to examine the extent and the manner in which legal systems contribute to the perpetuation of capitalist systems.

II. STATE AND LAW

In class societies the economic and social dominance of an exploiting class does not sustain itself automatically. The exploiting class always strives to turn itself into a ruling class by means of an institutional structure, the state, which operates to sustain and to reproduce that position. While the state is a product of class antagonism it takes on the appearance of being an entity which stands above society and which embodies the interests of the community as a whole. This apparently *universal* quality is especially significant with reference to legal systems:

> "Right, law, etc. are merely the symptom, the expression of *other* relations upon which State power rests. . . . These actual relations are in no way created by the State power; on the contrary they are the power creating it. The individuals who rule in these conditions, besides having to constitute their power in the form of the *State*, have to give their will, which is determined by these definite conditions, a universal expression as the will of the State, as law."[1]

The distinctive feature then of legal systems of class societies is the fact that they embody the material interests of the ruling class in a universal form, and thus present law as the embodiment of the interests of the community as a whole:

> "In a modern state, law must not only correspond to the general economic condition and be its expression, but must also be an *internally coherent* expression which does not owing to inner contradictions, reduce itself to nought. And in order to achieve this, the faithful reflection of economic conditions suffers increasingly. All the more so the more rarely it happens that a code of law is the blunt, unmitigated, unadulterated expression of the domination of a class—this in itself would offend the 'conception of right'."[2]

This striving for 'internal coherence', in which law comes to be seen as the embodiment of universal notions of 'justice' and 'right' needs to be explored. At the hands of bourgeois legal and political theorists it has been used to provide an ideological dogma, important in bourgeois political and legal theory, of the doctrine of the 'separation of powers'. The essence of this view is that the character of the democratic state is defined as one in which there exists a separation between the major components of the state. Specifically it is argued that not only is there, but also that there ought to be, a separation between the legislature, which makes the laws, and the judiciary, which apply those laws.

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[1] Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 366 (Moscow 1968).

[2] Engels, *Letter to C. Schmidt*, October 27, 1890. Marx/Engels *Selected Correspondence*, p. 504 (Moscow 1960).

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The Separation of Powers

The doctrine of the separation of powers has played, and continues to play a central part in bourgeois theory of the law and the state. There has been a tendency for Marxists in seeking to expose the ideological character of this doctrine to react against it by asserting the identity of the state and law. Thus the legal system has been presented simply as the direct and totally subservient agent of the state. Such a position is too simple, but more importantly it obscures the real class character of the legal system as a mechanism whereby the existing form of class domination is perpetuated and reproduced.

We need to start by asking, how does it come about that a separation appears to exist between law and state? Engels provides a useful starting point:

> "But once the state has become an independent power vis-a-vis society, it produces forthwith a further ideology. It is indeed among professional politicians, theorists of public law and jurists of private law that the connection with economic facts gets lost for fair (sic). Since in each particular case the economic facts must assume the form of juristic motives in order to receive legal sanction; and since, in so doing, consideration of course has to be given to the whole legal system already in operation, the juristic form is, in consequence, made everything and the economic content nothing."[3]

If these ideological functions are to be fulfilled they cannot operate exclusively as ideological forces, they must find some expression in the actual practice embodied within the legal system. As a consequence the legal system operates in a manner which cannot be explained exclusively by reference to the dictates of the state as a whole.

Contradictions within the State

The doctrine of the separation of powers appeals to the independence of the judiciary. Yet this independence is clearly very restricted. Judicial appointments are made by the highest representatives of the political apparatus of the state.[4]

But what does need to be stressed is that even the relative degree of autonomy sets up stresses and contradictions within the state as a whole. Decisions by courts do not always please the holders of state power. The protracted struggle between the courts and Nixon throughout the 'Watergate affair' is perhaps the most important recent example of such a tension in operation, in which the conflict between court and state contributed in no small measure to the downfall of Nixon.

But the tension between courts and state may also have advantages for the holders of state power. The institutional complexity of the English legal system allowed the government to brush the cobwebs off the Official solicitor whose intervention facilitated the release of the 'Pentonville 5' in 1972 when faced with the prospect of a General Strike. Frequently it serves as a convenient smoke-screen behind which to hide; Roy Jenkins, as Home Secretary, has consistently used the excuse of separation between government and courts to refuse to intervene and secure the release of the Shrewsbury pickets.

This discussion points towards the general conclusion that the relationship between the state and the legal system must always be a matter for concrete examination. While the general dependence of the law upon the state as a whole is an important proposition within Marxist theory, this must not be treated as if it suggested a complete identity between law and state.

III. DOMINATION AND HEGEMONY

Domination is a universal feature of class society. It consists in the subjection of one or more classes to another class (or grouping of classes) in such a way that exploitative relations are perpetuated. But the form that domination takes varies with the form of the exploitative class relations; thus the domination of slave by slaveholder differs from the employer's domination of the factory worker. Domination must be viewed not as a single act but as a process that reproduces the conditions for exploitative social relations.

Domination can only be based for very short periods of time upon direct physical coercion. Even the most barbarous and coercive systems do not rely exclusively upon coercive violence. Direct coercion will often play a major part in the establishment of a new system of class power, but, however much it continues to depend on physical repression, it will strive to promote other means of consolidating its domination.

An extremely fruitful approach to the discussion of domination is provided by the early leader of the Italian Communist Party, Antonio Gramsci, who made use of the concept of 'hegemony'. He used it to identify the processes which create:

> "the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great mass of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group (i.e. the ruling class)".[5]

[3] Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* in *Marx and Engels: Selected Works*, Vol. II, pp. 396-97 (Moscow 1958).

[4] In Britain on the initiative of the Lord Chancellor, himself a member of the Cabinet and as such a directly 'political' appointment. In the United States the political character of judicial appointments is even more apparent.

[5] Gramsci, A. *Prison Notebooks*, p. 12 (Lawrence & Wishart 1971).

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The vital characteristic of 'hegemony' is that it is an active process; it is concerned not merely with the *fact* of consent, but focuses upon the creation and the mobilisation of that consent. One major facet of the class struggle that takes place within capitalist societies is the continual struggle for influence over the ideas, perceptions and values of members of the different classes. In Britain the maintenance of capitalism would be impossible unless the capitalist class was able to decisively influence the ideas, attitudes and consciousness of the working class.

It is important to stress that the ideological struggle is not simply concerned with the conflict between general theories of society. It is concerned with every aspect of the way in which people think about, react to, and interpret their position in class society.

IV. COERCIVE AND IDEOLOGICAL DOMINATION

In examining the part that is played by law in the class struggle it is useful to distinguish between two different aspects. Law plays an important role in sustaining the domination of the ruling class because it operates both as a form of *coercive domination* and of *ideological domination*. It will also be necessary to stress that they are not simple alternatives. I hope to show the way in which these two elements are closely bound together and as such contribute to the special effectiveness of law as a mechanism of social order.

Law as Coercion

Let us first consider the coercive character of law. The legal system is able to call upon the organised power of the state. This repression operates both through specific institutions, which range from the courts themselves to the prison system, probation service, etc. In addition it also operates more generally through the police system which operates with wide-ranging powers, sanctioned by law, but able to act with a very considerable degree of autonomy.

Legal coercion operates at a number of different levels. Of greatest importance is the application of coercion to protect the *general conditions* of the capitalist order. First and foremost coercion is applied to protect and reinforce the property relations of capitalist society. There exists an increasingly complex body of 'offences against property' which are concerned with the defence of private property. Firstly they are important in demarcating the 'lawful' from the 'unlawful'; they differentiate between the unlawful appropriation of property, the acts of the 'criminals', and the lawful forms of appropriation that are the hallmark of the capitalist system. Just how close is the dividing line between lawful and unlawful appropriation has been clearly revealed by recent bribery and corruption cases. But secondly, it is not only the offender that is coerced, but all members of society because the coercion of the offender reinforces the values, attitudes and behaviour associated with the existence of private property. It is for this reason that it was stressed above that the coercive and ideological functions of law are closely related.

While the criminal law protects the property interests of the capitalist class it operates more generally to protect the 'private property' of all members of society. Indeed it is important to recognise that the vast majority of 'property offences' are committed, not against the property of the capitalist class, but rather against the property of non-capitalists. Property offences are usually directed against the privately owned consumption goods of working people.

Another way in which legal coercion is applied to defend the *general* conditions of capitalist society is with respect to 'offences against the person'. Again this area of the criminal law does not merely act against offences against members of the capitalist class. The significance of this type of legal coercion is that some level of general social order is a necessary precondition for the maintenance of its specifically capitalist content.

Examples of Legal Coercion

One of the most important manifestations of legal coercion is the application of law for the direct protection of the state itself. The state has at its disposal a veritable armoury of measures that are ready to be invoked to defend the existing political order. These range from a number of traditional offences such as treason, treachery and sedition (which have been invoked fairly infrequently in the recent past), through such legislation as the *Official Secrets Acts* of 1911 and 1920 and the *Incitement to Disaffection Act* 1934, to the wide ranging emergency powers which the ruling class has gradually accumulated. The *Emergency Powers Acts* of 1920 and 1964 give very extensive powers to the civil and military authorities to intervene in the class struggle. These powers have been used on no less than eight occasions since the War; on four of these occasions by the Heath government against dockers, power supply workers and the miners; Labour Governments have not shrunk from invoking them.

In the recent past Northern Ireland has been a fertile source of emergency regulations. The *Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act* 1973 and the *Prevention of Terrorism (Emergency Powers) Act* 1974 have aided the British government's struggle

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against the Irish people and their scope has been extended to the mainland.[6]

The ruling class also has at its disposal a wide range of legal devices that can be used against offences against public order. These range through riot, affray, unlawful assembly and breach of the peace. Of particular importance is the *Public Order Act* 1936, supposedly introduced to curb the Fascists, but used systematically against the Left. It is interesting to observe the skill of the police and courts in making use of 'appropriate' legal mechanisms. A good example has been the recent resuscitation of the *Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act* 1875.

In protecting the existing political order the law does not only have at its disposal the wide ranging powers contained in the legislation discussed above. The general principles of criminal law offer not only ample scope, but also special advantage. It is often in the interest of the ruling class to seek to depoliticise the class struggle. One of the means that is frequently invoked is to charge the 'political offender' with ordinary crimes. This can be achieved by using a charge that is incidental to the main social or political issue involved; the most favoured police strategy being to invoke charges involving or implying violence. A very good example of this technique is to be seen in the trial of the Shrewsbury pickets. The use of such charges allows the political issues to be ignored whilst branding the defendants as 'common criminals', a tactic favoured by Roy Jenkins and Frank Chapple in their attacks on the Shrewsbury pickets.

A related prosecution strategy is to use blanket charges; much in favour in the recent past has been the use of conspiracy charges. These are not only significant in that they allow the prosecution to evade some of the restrictions with regard to evidence and procedure that normally apply. But in addition, through the orchestration by the mass media, to create impressions of the existence of an unspecified 'threat to law and order'.

Authoritarianism and Legitimacy

The legal order has at its disposal this powerful armoury of techniques of legal coercion that enable it to directly intervene in the class struggle to defend the interests of the existing order. This direct intervention in the class struggle stands out most sharply in the case of industrial and trade union law.[7] The history of trade union law, from the *Combination Act* 1800 to the *Industrial Relations Act* 1971, is testimony to the attempt to provide a legal framework favourable to the interests of capital as opposed to those of labour. Yet it is also testimony to the extent of the resistance which over the period as a whole has not only forced tactical retreats, but has also witnessed significant advances in the legal positions of trade unions. I will return later to take up this question of law as an arena of class struggle.

What stands out in sharp relief is the extent to which the ruling class utilise a legal framework for sustaining and buttressing their class interests. But a certain degree of care is needed in drawing conclusions from this common ground. The argument is frequently advanced that in periods of crisis the capitalist class resort to an increasingly repressive strategy and embark upon major attacks upon civil liberties. This type of analysis is very clearly presented in John Hostettler's article *Trends to Authoritarian Rule in Britain*.[8] This line of argument is sometimes presented in such a way that it obscures important contradictory dimensions, which if correctly considered throw much light on the specific role of law within capitalist society.

Resort to Fascism not Automatic

The lurch to legal authoritarianism is checked by an equally strong need on the part of the ruling class to maintain the legitimacy of their class rule. This contradiction is not an interaction between two equal forces which smoothly balance each other out; hence there are periods in which there are major shifts towards authoritarianism, but equally there are periods of movement towards more liberal and less coercive forms. The particular result at any point in time is a complex result of the level of class struggle itself.

There is a more general, and possibly more fundamental, political point that underlies this discussion that needs to be more fully discussed. Lenin was correct when he argued that:

> "bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same; all these states, whatever their form in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie."[9]

Yet there has been a tendency (which is present in Lenin as well as in others) to regard bourgeois democracy as simply a sham or fraud designed to conceal the class character of the rule of the bour-

[6] For details on the use of law in Northern Ireland see Boyle, Hadden and Hillyard *Law and State: The Case of Northern Ireland* (Martin Robertson 1975).

[7] For a concise history of trade union law see K. W. Wedderburn, *The Worker and the Law* (Penguin 1965).

[8] *Marxism Today*, December 1973.

[9] Lenin, *State and Revolution*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 413.

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geoisie. Capitalism has been in existence long enough to demonstrate that its most persistent, stable and 'successful' form has proved to be the *bourgeois democratic* political form. Thus for the bourgeoisie whatever pressures manifest themselves towards the 'authoritarian solution' there is at the same time a profound concern to sustain the legitimacy of the capitalist order.

This analysis does not lead to the conclusion that the resort by the ruling class to fascism or to military coup is impossible. The tragic example of Chile is too urgent to allow such a naïve conclusion. But this analysis does insist that the resort to fascism is not the automatic response of a capitalist class in crisis. We should have no illusions about the fact that the capitalist class has been prepared, in the final analysis, to abandon bourgeois democracy. But we should be equally insistent that the interests of the bourgeoisie have been best served where they have been able to sustain their class rule within the bourgeois democratic form and that the ruling class itself has an interest in the preservation of bourgeois democracy.

The legal order plays a central role within bourgeois democracy. Thus while the coercive role of the legal order has been emphasised in the first half of this article it is now necessary to draw attention to and to examine the contribution made by the legal system to sustaining the legitimacy of the bourgeois democratic order. In other words it is necessary to discuss law as a method of ideological domination.

VI. LAW AS IDEOLOGICAL DOMINATION

Repressive and ideological domination are in no sense alternatives. On the contrary they are interdependent; they interact and reinforce each other. While the coercion of the criminal law is directed against those it punishes, its ideological effects are directed much wider. For example the jailing of the Shrewsbury pickets was legal violence against the accused which was concerned with more than 'deterring' others; it was an ideological offence against the strategy of the 'flying picket' developed by the miners and applied so effectively by building workers.

Ideological domination describes those activities and processes whereby the assent to the existing social order is produced and mobilised. The notion of assent embraces both the idea of legitimacy as active assent and also acceptance as the passive form. The means by which assent is produced are ideological in that it involves the production and dissemination of ideas which affect social practice through the determination of the social consciousness of individuals, groups and classes. This process is one of domination in that it involves two elements; firstly, a differential ability of groups and classes in society to produce, communicate and disseminate ideas and, secondly, these ideas, directly or indirectly, have consequences for the maintenance of the existing social order.

Law is ideological in that it conveys or transmits a complex set of attitudes, values and theories about aspects of society. Its ideological content forms part of the dominant ideology because these attitudes, values, etc. are ones which reinforce and legitimise the existing social order.

Legal Rules and Social Relations

The most pervasive ideological effect of law is to be found in the fact that legal rules and their application give effect to existing social relations. The rules of law affirm the social and economic relations that exist within capitalist society. Thus the law of property is not only based upon the inequality of property ownership but it reinforces it by allowing and facilitating the owners of property to make use of that property as capital. The complex of legal rules relating to mortgages, trusts, leases etc. not only allows but also enables property to be used as capital. The law relating to contracts and commercial activity gives effect to the mechanisms of the market.

Similarly labour law facilitates the capitalist form of the relationships between labour and capital; it gives effect to the economic fact of the dependence of the majority upon the sale of their labour power. It embodies the economic power of capital over labour by granting to the employer rights regarding not only the control of labour but also over the hiring and firing of labour.

Rules of law impinge on almost every form of social relations. For example, family law, despite the reforms of the past decades, incorporates the fact of the dominant role of the husband over the wife, of the parents over the children, Likewise the law of landlord and tenant underlines the power of landlords over tenants in regard to the supply of housing. It is important to stress that the legal rules do not *create* the social relations that make up capitalist society. But by stating them as principles and by enforcing them the law operates not only to reinforce these relations but also to legitimise them in their existing form. This function is further advanced by the role of law in conferring authority upon officials such as the police, magistrates, etc.

The rules of law not only define social relations but confer rights and powers upon certain categories of individuals. Thus, for example, landlord and tenant law not only incorporates the economic fact of the monopolisation of housing by private interests, but it also legitimises that economic power by granting rights to landlords to extract rent, to impose conditions and to evict tenants. The legal system not only reinforces existing social and

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economic relations, but in addition it confers authority upon dominant social interests.

Mutual Interests of the Bourgeoisie

One important aspect which should not be overlooked is the extent to which law operates to regulate the mutual interests of the bourgeoisie. It provides a mechanism for the resolution of disputes and conflicts that arise *between* capitalist interests:

> "The administration of . . . civil justice is concerned almost exclusively with conflicts over property and hence affects almost exclusively the possessing classes."[10]

Company law, for example, is concerned in the main with the respective interests of shareholders and directors. Much commercial law is likewise concerned with the interests of merchants, middlemen and dealers.

The law regulating the interests of the propertied classes is detailed and complex, but it has a significant common core. The operation of capitalistic functions is facilitated where the law provides a degree of certainty and predictability. What bourgeois legal theory fails to recognise is that it is only that element of law which regulates the mutual interests of the bourgeoisie, and not the whole of law in a capitalist society that exhibits this quest for certainty.

Legal Rules and Appearance of Social Relations

It is necessary to consider more closely the nature of the correspondence between legal rules and the social relations to which they relate. Legal rules do not simply 'reflect' social relations. The rules of law have an added ideological dimension. In order to explain this it is important to recall that a central feature of capitalist society is that its essential features are obscured or concealed by the very nature of the operation of the capitalist economy. Marx insisted on the need to distinguish between how things appear (the 'appearance' or 'phenomenal form') and how they really are '(real substratum' or 'essence').

The 'real' relations that exist find themselves expressed in legal rules in a distorted or truncated form because the law gives effect to only the appearance ('phenomenal form') of social relations. This theoretical point could be taken further by applying the argument developed by Marx in the famous section on 'the fetishism of commodities' in *Capital* Vol. I in which he shows how our comprehension of commodities embodies not the real social relations of production which create them, but simply as things; and as a result what are relations between people come to be seen as relations between things.

So legal rules appear abstracted from social relations, and are therefore a 'fetishistic' expression of social relations. Legal rules are further divorced from the social relations to which they refer because they (like the state itself) appear separated, independent of society; they seem to have an independent origin and life of their own. Thus as ideological forms of social relations legal rules are doubly removed from the real world.

Legal rules express the appearance of social relations:

> "This phenomenal form, which makes the actual relations invisible . . . forms the basis of all the juridical (legal) notions of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production, of all its illusions as to liberty."[11]

Marx showed how our initial perception of the capitalist economy focuses upon the process of circulation and exchange, and thus ignores the production process itself. It is significant to note that legal rules follow this pattern and reduce social relations to a system of exchanges. The key legal concept of bourgeois law is that of *contract*. All the most important relations within capitalist society are moulded into the form of contractual relations.

Principles of Contract

By treating social relations as 'contracts' bourgeois law strips them of their most important characteristics. Perhaps the most important example is in the labour relationship between employers and workers. At law the labour relation is a contract between individual employer and individual employee; they are therefore presumed to bargain over the terms of the contract. This individualising of the contract of employment by focusing on it as an individual exchange excludes the social character of the relation between capital and labour. It is incapable of embracing the increasingly collective determination of labour relations through negotiations between trade unions and employers' federations. English law has reduced itself to great confusion in attempting to preserve the 'individual contract' whilst taking some note of the real 'collective contract'.

It is not only economic relations that are reduced to contractual form. A wide range of other social

[10] Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* in Marx & Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 34 (Moscow 1958).

[11] Marx, K., *Capital*, Vol. I, p. 540 (Moscow 1961); my addition in brackets.

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relations are similarly treated. Thus, for example, the social institution of marriage is enshrined in law as a contract within which the 'parties' have obligations which derive from the contract, and the 'breach' of which can result in the contract being terminated, i.e. in divorce. Yet by expressing the marriage relationship in contractual form the law inadvertently exposes something of the real economic basis on which the bourgeois marriage is based, founded upon the economic dependence of women.

The principles of contract have been so pervasive that they have been developed into a contractual ideology which continues to have wider ranging influences. Contractual ideology leans heavily upon the notions of freedom and equality. But the 'freedom' and 'equality' to which it refers is purely *formal*; that is individuals are regarded as free if there is no legal bar to them entering into a contract, and are therefore deemed to be equal. It is a notion of equality brilliantly captured by Anatole France:

> "The law in its majestic impartiality forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets and steal bread."[12]

These formal notions of freedom and equality are characteristic of bourgeois legal and political theory. They do violence to social reality because they are incapable of grasping the real inequality and lack of freedom which results from the dependence of all workers upon the sale of their labour.

Depoliticisation

This discussion has focused on the way in which the rules of law, far from being pure or independent creations, are but a distorted expression of the existing social relations which are thereby reinforced and legitimised. This ideological character of legal rules is extended by two further considerations.

One of the difficulties in penetrating the ideological form of bourgeois law stems from the fact that it operates by abstracting the cases that come before the courts from their social and class context. They are thereby reduced to the status of being purely *technical* issues, apparently divorced from any political or ideological overtones. If, for example, a householder inquires why it is that tax relief is granted upon mortgage payments but not upon rent, the law replies that it is not a question of relief upon mortgage or rent, but upon interest repayments. By focusing upon a technical distinction the law thereby obscures the social and economic reality.

Secondly, the law further depoliticises social issues through the universal form of many legal rules. The fact that rules of criminal law protect the person and property of *all* members of society not only hides the fundamental class differences, but it also treats the capital of the employer and the personal belongings of the worker as if they were the same. The ideological significance is that it induces the view that all classes in society have a common interest in the protection of private property. Thereby the legal system is aided in fulfilling the ideological function of asserting the unity of interests of all classes. The ideology of the 'rule of law' operates to assert and reinforce, and even seeks to celebrate, a social unity and cohesion in the face of the manifest class differentiation of capitalist society.

Bourgeois Legal Ideology

There is one further facet of the ideological character of law. It is directly ideological in the sense that the legal system propagates a range of views about the nature of the social and political system. This general ideological character of law is contained in what I will call 'bourgeois legal ideology'.

Bourgeois legal ideology is the fundamental component of the justification of the bourgeois democratic state; many of its elements directly enter into the consciousness of wide sections of the population. The central element of this ideology is the doctrine of 'the rule of law'. Its classic expression is to be found in Dicey:

> "When we speak of the 'rule of law' as a characteristic of our country we mean, not only that with us no man is above the law, but (what is a different thing) that here every man, whatever be his rank or condition, is subject to the ordinary law of the realm. . . . With us every official, from the Prime Minister down to a constable . . . is under the same responsibility for every act done without legal justification as any other citizen."[13]

The fundamental tenet is that both the ruled and the rulers are equally subject to a common system of law. The 'law' itself is thus viewed as something separate from the interests of classes. As such it plays a central role in the legitimation of the bourgeois democratic political order.

One particularly interesting feature of bourgeois legal ideology in the context of English law is the way in which it holds itself out as the protector of the individual against the incursions of the state. This antithesis between individual and state has a lengthy history in bourgeois legal thought. Its roots were in the historical alliance between the common

[12] Exact source not known.

[13] A. V. Dicey *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* (1885) (Macmillan 1967) p. 193.

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law judges and the bourgeois interests against the absolutism of the Stuarts. It became more fully elaborated during the nineteenth century as the legal reflex of laissez-faire ideology. And in the twentieth century it has been used as the basis of anti-state attitudes which characterise one element of the conservative reaction to the growth of the Welfare State.

Bourgeois Assumptions

In addition to explicit constitutional principles bourgeois legal ideology consists of a range of important background or implicit assumptions. The intention is only to roughly sketch some of these assumptions, but at the same time to argue that the more the 'law and order' debate moves into the centre of the political stage the more important it becomes to develop a systematic critique of bourgeois legal ideology.

Almost all discussion about law is based upon the assumption that the existence of law is an inevitable or natural feature of social life. Hence law becomes identified with 'civilisation'; the absence of law is seen as synonymous with the absence of civilisation. The classic expression of this assumption is the equation of the absence of law with anarchy; in its classical form in the political philosophy of Hobbes the absence of law implies a condition of 'the war of all against all.' The whole of society is presumed to have an interest in the existence of law, and is therefore closely connected with the 'universalism' of law discussed above.

A closely associated assumption insists upon the inherent rationality of law. The existence of rules of social life brought together or codified as law is presented as socially desirable in that it makes social life more certain and predictable. Social life is viewed as if it were a game or a sport in which it is essential that all the 'players' adhere to the same rules; without this common set of rules social life would revert to anarchy. Such an attitude places stress on the desirability of rules *as such*, and hence leaves unquestioned the content of those rules and any questions concerning the social and economic interests that are embodied in the rules.

Flowing directly from the insistence upon the naturalness and rationality of law is the insistence that adherence to law is natural, and as a corollary, that non-adherence to law is unnatural or deviant. The very existence of a state is treated as a sufficient condition to make obedience to law obligatory for all citizens. The assumption is made that the offender who violates the law is a deviant whose deviation stems from some pathological condition. While the nature of the pathology appealed to has varied, from the genetic inferiority of the 'lower orders' to deficiencies in 'socialisation', the same assumption of the naturalness of obedience to law persists. It is interesting to note that in the recent past this essentially conservative tradition has come under increasing attack from criminologists, and that radical theories of crime are being developed which draw upon Marxism.[14]

These interrelated attitudes and assumptions about law are not usually expressed in a coherent form; they are a cluster of ideas, but they add up to an assertion of the 'sanctity of law' which forms the heart of the pervasive and powerful 'law and order' ideology. This ideology finds expression not only in the moralising editorials of the *Times*, but also forms an important part of widespread and diffuse social attitudes. The essential substance of these views is that they appeal to the sanctity of law, elevated above social life itself, and thereby ignore the class content of law and its role in legitimising the existing forms of class domination.

Jurisprudence

There is one final aspect of the ideological character of law that needs to be mentioned. The most formal and systematic expression of legal ideology is provided by jurisprudence or legal theory. The history of jurisprudence consists in successive attempts to provide a justification for obedience to law. The central concern has been to provide a socially persuasive account of the legitimacy of the existing legal order, and through that of the social order itself. However, a very interesting development has occurred within jurisprudence which is worth noting. Increasingly a number of liberal academics have been afflicted with growing self-doubt and disillusionment with the whole edifice of law, and are increasingly aware of a very real decline in the legitimacy of the existing legal order.[15]

The operation of law is, therefore, not confined to simply giving effect to the direct and immediate interests of the ruling class. It must be understood as having an ideological function of an extensive character. Within capitalist society the legal system not only provides substantial ideological underpinnings to the existing capitalist organisation of society. It also provides a consistent and coherent legitimation of a multitude of key institutions and principles that are central to the smooth operation of a system of capitalist social relations.

It is this ability to integrate two critical functions, on the one hand to give practical effect to the interests of the dominant class, and, at the same time,

[14] See, for example, Taylor, Walton and Young—*Critical Criminology* (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1975).

[15] This anxiety is explicitly found in such books as Eugene Rostow—*Is Law Dead*? (New York 1970), and Robert Wolff—*The Rule of Law* (New York 1971).

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to provide a justification or legitimation for these interests in terms of some higher and apparently universal interest of all classes that demonstrates the real power and influence of law in capitalist society.

VII. LAW AND CLASS STRUGGLE

Our attention has been focused on the part that law plays in the process of reproducing capitalist social order. Yet law is not simply an instrument which can be wielded at will by an omnipotent ruling class. Precisely because it is an active element in the class struggle, it is at the same time affected by and involved in the class struggle. The law and the legal system form part of the context within which the class struggle takes place, and it is itself an arena in which that struggle occurs. To recognise that class struggle occurs *within* the legal system is not to suggest that the legal system is some neutral territory over which the class struggle wrestles for control. As a major component of the state law is necessarily part of the process through which the ruling class seeks to preserve its domination.

To argue that class struggle occurs within law is only the first step in examining the way in which class struggle makes itself evident within law. It has been argued above that law plays a central part in bourgeois democratic society, not only in theory but also in practice. The form taken by the class struggle has its boundaries broadly defined by the existing law. Thus, for example, trade union activity in Britain is pursued by forms of struggle that are recognised as being lawful. Some of the most important stages in the history of British trade unionism have been periods when struggle has occurred around attempts by the ruling class to narrow or restrict this lawful sphere of operations. The struggle against the Industrial Relations Act was a classic example of this type of struggle.

While law plays this important part of defining the parameters of class struggle, it also needs to be recognised that it does not necessarily stay confined within this framework. Indeed a change in this boundary or its breach will normally mark a critical phase in the class struggle. For example, a very important stage of the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act occurred in the months after it had been put on the statute book. The right-wing inside the Labour Movement argued that despite the objection they had to the Act it was now 'law' and had to be accepted. The critical phase was the decisions made in the individual unions and within the TUC (Croydon and Blackpool Congresses 1971) as to whether they would 'register' under the Act, and thus come within 'the law', or whether to remain unregistered and to conduct trade union activity without the forms of protection that had been established since the beginning of the century.

Struggle for Legislative Reforms

Not only does law play an important part in defining the parameters of the class struggle, but many important stages in the class struggle take place around demands for legislative reforms. Marx himself gave considerable attention to one very important example of such struggles, the early Factory Acts (in particular the *Factories Regulation Act* of 1833). His chapter in *Capital*, Volume I, on 'The Working-Day' is a classic study of the inter-relation and interaction of class forces in a struggle for legislative control of working hours:[16]

> "The creation of a normal working-day is, therefore, the product of a protracted civil war, more or less dissembled, between the capitalist class and the working-class."[17]

Elsewhere he summarises the significance of the victory underlying the Act in the following terms:

> "it was the first time that in broad daylight the political economy of the middle class succumbed to the political economy of the working class."[18]

His analysis makes clear that the Factory Acts were not simply the direct result of class struggle between the capitalist and working classes. Two particular features of the analysis are worth drawing attention to. The first concerns the relationship between the state and the capitalist class. The advent of machinery and industrial production in the textile industry gives rise to a veritable orgy of exploitation, in which the working-day is extended to such lengths that a real threat is posed to the survival of the work force. At this stage the state represents the collective interests of capital, as distinct from the interests of individual capitalists.

Secondly, he stresses the divisions between the various sections of the capitalist class. Not only is there the division between the landed and industrial capitalists, which led the Tories as representatives of landed capital, to support factory legislation. But more important are the divisions between the more advanced sections of industrial capital and the smaller, more traditional employers. The passage of the factory acts not only represented a victory for the working class, but also for the more advanced sections of capital, who triumphed over their less efficient rivals. The overall analysis therefore brings out with great sharpness the way in which the

[16] Marx, *Capital* I, Chapter 10, pp. 231-302 (Moscow 1961).

[17] Marx, *ibid*, p. 299.

[18] Marx, *Inaugural Address to the Workingmen's International Association* in Marx & Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 383 (Moscow 1958).

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development of the productive forces, in association with the more or less conscious struggle of various classes, finds its expression in legislation.

In his discussion of factory legislation Marx showed clearly how each legislative victory was only partial; whilst each was a major practical and ideological victory, the employers, with the direct complicity of the magistrates and judges, impeded the effective enforcement of the provisions of the statutes.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In this article I have stressed the importance of law in capitalist society, and as a consequence to argue that it is a question which requires a more thorough analysis by Marxists. While this article does not complete that task, it has sought to raise a number of questions, and to stress a number of areas for discussion. Some of these have been of a general nature which revolve around an assertion of law as an important agency in the maintenance of capitalist social relations. In particular I have argued the need to understand the significance of law as a system of ideological-coercive domination. It is through this emphasis on this combined process, rather than as two distinct or separate processes, that we can achieve a better understanding of the specific functioning of law within capitalist society, and is also of assistance in achieving a fuller theoretical treatment of the capitalist state.

The legal system within the bourgeois democratic state operates in such a way as to legitimise the class rule of the bourgeoisie. This legitimation involves not only the recognition and reinforcement of the social and economic relations of capitalism. It also encompasses the reification of law (through which law appears to be a power above and outside society) in which the social and political relations of capitalist society are presented as natural and universal. Law then operates to provide ideological reinforcement to those processes which make the reality of class and class power less visible.

The really difficult question is posed by the fact that bourgeois democratic society is not entirely a facade and a fraud. It it were its veils and deceits would have been stripped away long ago. Its strength and persistence result from the fact that in varying degrees it has successfully combined the continued social, political and economic dominance of the capitalist class with, at the same time, a significant level of involvement of the exploited classes sufficient to ensure a relatively high level of acceptance of, and even commitment to, the existing order.

Within the bourgeois democratic state law provides, alongside those aspects which reinforce the domination of the ruling class, an important set of rights, protections and powers which in varying degrees incorporate certain class interests of the non-ruling classes. The most obvious examples of these are such things as the right to vote, to form trade unions, to take strike action, etc.

It is important to recognise that most of these have been secured as the result of class struggle. But these facts should not lead us to view them simply as concessions wrung from the capitalist. Once granted they become woven into the fabric of bourgeois democracy. It should also be noted that we need to recognise that the range of legal rights which may be used to the advantage of the working class extends beyond the range of the more obvious 'political' rights mentioned. The law confers rights and protections upon all classes as 'citizens' in bourgeois democracy. It is of course important to stress the inequality of their application and the inequality of access to legal redress. Yet this does not negate their political and ideological importance. Their very existence plays a significant part in securing the acceptance of, and allegiance to, the existing capitalist social order.

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and excused people like himself that such was the prestige of Stalin that they could do nothing about it.

That such a man could become the General Secretary of the great Bolshevik Party is almost beyond belief. His removal, I would estimate, marked a most healthy development and correction.

Our Problem

Just as I would object to anyone outside the British Communist Party telling us what or what not to do, so would I not be impudent and expect other parties to do what we British Communists would like them to do.

But no one can dismiss lightly the comradely criticism that the failure of the Soviet comrades to give a full and comprehensive historical survey of their party and the difficulties that arose does give free rein to anti-Soviet elements most marked in countries like Britain. Faced with such difficulties and in the absence of a Soviet analysis long-standing and well proven friends of the Soviet Union are forced to make their own analysis. Such an analysis cannot be other than one-sided. How could it be otherwise without the full facts. And only the Soviet Union has these.

Leaders come and leaders go and irrespective of what happens elsewhere the revolutionary struggle of our working class goes on. And the problem for our Communist Party and the only one for which we have a main responsibility is how best to give leadership and unity to the powerful working class movement in Britain and win socialism for our people.

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Brecht and the Emotions

Nick Jacobs

This article is the emended transcript of a paper given at the Brecht Weekend held on February 19/20, 1976 at NUFTO Hall, Jockey's Fields, London, organised by the Communist Party Literature Group.

Introduction—Epic Theatre and Estrangement

Despite the comparative dearth, until recently, of productions of his plays in British theatres, Brecht's name has become a household one, and the word 'Brechtian' is widely used to mean a cool, dry, aseptic, even slightly cynical approach. Now, with the rise since the late sixties of agit-prop and other politically conscious drama groups, Brecht's ideas about theatre have gained widespread understanding and recognition.

These ideas have often been made to sound unnecessarily complicated, whereas they are in fact quite simple. They propose, namely, that in the modern theatre the stimulation in the audience of psychological and emotional identification with individual *character* should be replaced or subordinated to the provocation of intellectual and social curiosity and concern about historical *situation*.

The difficulties surrounding Brecht's theories have arisen mainly for two reasons. First, because he called his theatre *epic*, and this word has mystified people. In fact, Brecht used it merely in opposition to *dramatic*, to describe his theatre's focus on human history and social processes rather than on impersonal fate and psychological tension. Second, because Brecht realised that although what he wanted of theatre was quite simple, it was difficult to break his audiences and actors away from their long traditions. He therefore devoted much of his time to working out and refining an acting and production technique which would achieve this. This was the famous technique of *estrangement*—'Verfremdung'—also unfortunately translated as 'alienation' (with which, in its Marxist sense, it has nothing to do). Estrangement is a way of making the audience, consciously or unconsciously, see apparently normal behaviour in a new light, and therefore to question both the behaviour, and perhaps 'the old light'. Thus, Brecht says:

> For a man to see his mother as a man's wife the effect of estrangement is needed; this occurs, for instance, if he acquires a step-father.[1]

[1] *Schriften zum Theater*, vol. III, Frankfurt, 1963, p. 175.

It is easy to see how such estrangement helps to break audiences away from the usual way of seeing, and identifying with, what happens on the stage. To take a modern example: in Trevor Griffiths's play *The Comedians*, some amateur club entertainers are about to rehearse their acts in an evening class. A Pakistani joins the class by mistake and stays to watch. His presence has an estranging effect because it introduces a new, or *strange*, element which immediately throws new light on the possibly racist jokes we anticipate from the entertainers.

So much for this brief discussion of Brecht's theories and the difficulties associated with them. But a problem remains. This is that, just as Marx and Engels had initially to overemphasise the role of the economic factor, in the narrow sense, when working out historical materialism—and were as a result misunderstood by antagonists and even some protagonists—so Brecht had initially to overstress certain aspects of his theories when working out and fighting through the idea of epic theatre, and was in his turn similarly misunderstood.

In no area is this truer or more important than in that of his attitude to the emotions, where he has been misrepresented and misunderstood in a particularly drastic form, especially in this country. It is therefore the primary aim of this paper to correct the widespread misunderstanding of Brecht on this issue, and specifically to respond to the charge that he had a negative or scornful attitude to the emotions.

In order to do this, it is necessary first to try and place Brecht's decisive early development, with special reference—for reasons which should become clear later—to his attitude to Expressionist theatre, in its proper literary historical context.

Background—Naturalism and Expressionism

Brecht's life and work can be divided into four parts, though they should not be regarded as totally separate. The first is primarily a reactive, pre-Marxist, albeit rebellious and even revolutionary period, up to about 1927-28—from *Baal* to *Man is Man*. The second is the period when he developed as a Marxist and didactic playwright—from 1928 to about 1933—from *The Threepenny Opera* to *The Seven Deadly Sins*. The third period, from 1933 to 1937, included the beginning of the period of the

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united front against fascism, characterised by the plays *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich* and *Señora Carrar's Rifles*. The fourth and last period dates from the beginning of the Second World War and continues until Brecht's death in 1956, during which time most of the full-length plays were written.

It is not necessary to proceed through Brecht's career chronologically for the purposes of this paper, but it is important at least to start at the beginning because it is a writer's beginnings, and that often means primarily his reactions to the literary world around him, that imprints itself on his development and determines the direction he takes.

What was decisive for Brecht's early development was the Naturalist and more especially the Expressionist theatre of the end of Imperial Germany and the birth of the Weimar Republic. By Naturalist theatre is meant plays by authors like Hauptmann, Südermann, Zola, Tolstoy, some Ibsen, some Shaw —the theatre of verisimilitude rather than realism, in which, in the words of a simile used by Brecht, the actors treat the auditorium as if it were a fourth wall with the audience looking through a keyhole in the door.

It was Georg Lukács who pointed out the essential similarity between 19th century Naturalism and 20th century Expressionism[2]; namely that both lacked a profound social analytic base and were characterised by what can be called a quantitative approach—Naturalism by a massing of physical and photographic detail of facts, Expressionism (though reacting against Naturalism) by an equally quantitative and non-analytic massing of the emotions.

Brecht's was a reaction against what he called this 'culinary' theatre—this feast of circumstantial detail and melodrama (in the case of Naturalism) and of ranting emotion (in the case of Expressionism).

Many adjectives have been used to describe Expressionist theatre: individualist, escapist, screaming, declamatory, explosive, rhetorical, cosmic, rhapsodic. For those who have not seen or read a German Expressionist play, it is worth taking a typical example to show what Brecht was reacting to.

Die Wandlung ('The Transformation'), a violently pacifist play by Ernst Toller, subtitled 'The Struggle of a Man', written in 1917-18, has most of the ingredients. Its motto is 'Ye art the Way'. The hero is an outsider, Friedrich, who 'envies the dead their roots'. A friend urges him to join the army to fight in the African wars. He does so but is rejected by all the other soldiers except a madman. He goes on night patrol during which there is a dance of death in the jungle and gibbering skeletons. Friedrich lands up in hospital with a high fever; but he is a hero because thousands of 'savages' have been slaughtered. The next act sees Friedrich as a patriotic sculptor working on a symbol of Victory for the Fatherland until the sight of the war wounded, and his own girl friend's desertion, lead him to smash up his work and pick up a revolver to shoot himself. He is prevented by his sister who tells him that the true path leads to God—'to God who lives in Man/ Your way is toward Man.' To which he replies:

> 'Sun it surrounds me
> Freedom streams through to me
> My eyes show the way
> I'll follow it, sister,
> Alone but with you
> Alone but not alone
> In the knowledge of Man

(stage direction: *strides ECSTATICALLY to the door*).

Friedrich is eventually transformed into a kind of mass revolutionary leader, and the play ends as follows:

> *All now stand upright, hands stretching aloft. They then grasp each other's hands and stride off chanting:*
> Brothers stretch your martyred hands,
> Flaming joyous tones!
> Stride through our free country!
> Revolution! Revolution!

In 1920 Brecht himself wrote a cryptic note on this play:
' . . . . Best forgotten at once. Flimsy cosmos. Man as material, manifesto, not as man. Man in the abstract, the singular of Mankind.'[3] His own development up to that time had contained strong Expressionist elements—in *Baal* for instance—and his own experience of the war, like his contemporary Toller's, had produced a similar violent and extreme pacifism. But already in 1920 Brecht wrote: 'I can compete with the ultra-modernists in hunting for new forms and experimenting with my feelings. But I keep realising that the essence of art

[2] In ' "Grösse und Verfall" des Expressionismus' ' "Splendour and Decline" of Expressionism', in *Internationale Literatur*, no. 1, Moscow, 1934: the title is perhaps a play on Balzac's *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes*.

[3] Quoted in John Willett's *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, Methuen, 1956, p. 109. This book is the best on Brecht in English; with *Brecht on Theatre*, also translated and edited by John Willett (Hill and Wang paperback, New York, 1964), it is indispensable reading for anyone interested in the modern theatre. As will become evident below we are all indebted to John Willett for the high quantity and quality of his translation and editing of Brecht in English.

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is simplicity . . . and that the essence of its form is coolness.'[4]

This was the beginning of a development which was to lead him from *Baal* and his other early plays to the austere simplicity and spareness of his adaptation of Gorky's *Mother*. In February 1922 he wrote: 'I hope . . . I've avoided one common artistic bloomer, that of trying to carry people away. Instinctively I've kept my distance . . . the spectator's splendid isolation is left intact . . . he is not fobbed off with an invitation to feel sympathetically, to fuse with the hero and seem significant. . . . A higher type of interest can be got from making comparisons, from whatever is different, amazing, impossible to overlook.'[5]

It is important to remember that this sober reaction to the emotional intoxication of Expressionism was not isolated and was not just a peculiarity of Brecht's psychological or aesthetic development. A leading contemporary Expressionist, the poet and playwright Iwan Goll, published an essay in 1921 in which he linked the death of Expressionism with the end of the revolutionary ferment during and after the First World War, and with the ensuing comparative restoration of political life in Central and Eastern Europe. This was undoubtedly true, and Brecht's own development was paralleled by others, in architecture, art, and eventually the novel, a process which produced what came to be known as the *Neue Sachlichkeit*—or 'New Objectivity'—movement.

As we know, Brecht was soon to go beyond 'New Objectivity', with its tendency to stress only the technical aspects of artistic production, and to go on to Marxism at the end of the twenties. But these were his decisive beginnings, and it is against the background of emotional Expressionism that his sometimes not only unemotional but even apparently anti-emotional plays and theories were developed.

The Attack on Brecht

Having sketched the context in which Brecht developed his own ideas about theatre, it is time to discuss the way he can be and has been misunderstood and misrepresented.

There is no need to say anything here about the wilfully ignorant journalistic distorters of Brecht. For them, as a Marxist, Brecht is someone who sees all motivation in terms of economic profit and loss, who therefore cannot possibly understand the finer human sentiments. This attitude is found still in almost every primitive and hostile reference to Marxism. It finds its typical expression in the remark G. K. Chesterton makes in his Introduction to Dickens's *A Child's History of England* (still available in the Everyman's Library): 'I have often wondered how the scientific Marxians and the believers in "the materialist view of history" will ever manage to teach their dreary economic generalisations to children: but I suppose they will have no children.'

A much more complex and altogether sophisticated attack on Brecht was launched by Martin Esslin in his book *Brecht: A Choice of Evils*.[6] This work cannot be ignored; it was and is still widely praised and has been almost continuously in print since it was published and is now widely available in paperback, unlike—unfortunately—its far superior predecessor by a few months, John Willett's *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (see footnote 3).

Esslin's book expresses most of the major misconceptions about Brecht in a particularly clear and forceful way. It therefore provides a legitimate target on which to focus this main part of the paper.

The thesis of Esslin's 'debatable psycho-political interpretation', as Willett calls it, is as follows: Brecht's adherence to Marxism from 1928 was a reaction to his early storm and stress period of emotional indulgence and intoxication—as exemplified in *Baal* and in much of the early poetry—and his sense of being at the mercy of compulsions beyond his conscious control. In other words, according to Esslin, Brecht turned to Marxism in order to try and purge himself of the sensuous and emotional side of his character. He sums up his understanding of Brecht's development by stating: 'a deeply irrational nature could best express itself in clinging to an irrational creed.'[7]

As I hope to show, in attempting to substantiate his thesis and at the same time to do justice to what Brecht actually wrote, Esslin commits a double distortion, first on the level of theory, second on the level of the plays and poems themselves.

'Brecht,' writes Esslin, 'was a confessed and aggressive rationalist. From the time of his final conversion to Marxism in the late twenties he endeavoured to make his writing a scientific activity, a series of controlled experiments . . . devoted to the elucidation of social relations and to the transformation of society by producing strictly calculated, socially useful responses in the audience. *The element of emotion was thus excluded both in the writer and in the public*' (itals added).[8] But, Esslin says: 'Behind the rational, propagandist surfaces of plays written as ice-cold intellectual exercises, there is always a

[4] Quoted in *Collected Plays*, vol. 1, edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim, Methuen, 1974, p. xiv.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. xv.

[6] Methuen, 1956.

[7] Esslin, p. 216.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

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layer of profound emotion, repressed, but all the more powerful.'[9]

In other words: Brecht excluded emotions from his theory, and tried to do so, and thought he had succeeded in doing so, in his plays and poems—whereas in fact, according to Esslin, the 'repressed emotional content communicates itself to the deep layers of the readers' and spectators' mind and is felt as a *poetic* quality. In fact the tension between the poet's conscious aim and the subconscious emotional content of his work of which he himself is unaware, is in Brecht's case the source of its poetic power.'[10]

Esslin's problem is that he thinks very highly of Brecht as a poet but is himself a committed anti-communist, and this tortuous argument provides him with the only solution to his dilemma. However, it is not only tortuous, but the facts are totally against it. The best way to demonstrate this is to confront Esslin with Brecht's own words and works, his theory and his practice.

Theory

We have seen how Brecht developed his theories against the extreme emotionalism of Expressionism; hence, his understandably extreme reaction. At the first Munich production of *Baal*, the audience was confronted with a placard over the stage reading: 'Stop Gawping so Romantically.' He was quoted in an interview as saying: 'I don't let my feelings intrude in my dramatic work. I aim at an extremely classical, cold, highly intellectual style of performance. I'm not writing for the scum who want to have the cockles of their hearts warmed.'[11] And again, in conversation: 'I have feelings only when I have a headache—never when I am writing—for then I think' (Esslin himself uses this as a motto for one of his chapters).

There are many other examples of Brecht's desire to shock bourgeois theatregoers out of their conventional attitudes with such remarks as these. Unfortunately for Esslin they invariably date from his pre-Marxist period, the very phase in his life in which, according to Esslin's thesis, Brecht was wallowing in the sensuality which the cold and relentless intellectualism of Marxism was supposed to replace and repress. Moreover, when we look at Brecht's notes and articles written when and after he does turn to Marxism, we find something entirely different from what Esslin leads us to expect.

In a note on epic theatre written as early as 1927 we find Brecht saying the following: 'The essential point of the epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason. . . . At the same time it would be quite wrong to try and deny emotion to this kind of theatre. It would be much the same thing as trying to deny emotion to modern science.'[12]

And in January 1928 Brecht wrote the following striking sentence, to which it can be said he remained true for the rest of his life: 'An artist is someone in whom moments of greatest emotion go together with moments of greatest clarity.'[13]

In February 1929—the dates are important because it is often said that there was a softening up process at work in Brecht whereby he grew flabbier about the emotions as he grew older—he wrote: 'Epic theatre has as its source and interlocutor not the great suffering individual. The question is repeatedly posed by the respective situation. . . . The sufferings of the characters which arouses the sufferings of the audience (as empathy) in bourgeois drama is superfluous where interest in events no longer depends on interest in a particular individual but is focused on the situation. For this reason epic drama will appear uninteresting (cold) to people not used to seeing situations as questions, or who do not like (or who fear) questions.'[14]

Again, in the thirties Brecht wrote a piece entitled, 'A Short List of the Most Popular and Banal Misconceptions about Epic Theatre'. One such misconception was: 'Epic theatre is against all Emotion, although reason and feeling cannot be separated.' To which Brecht gave the following characteristic reply: 'Epic theatre is not against the emotions, but investigates them and does more than just arouse them. It is the conventional theatre which is guilty of separating reason and emotion—by virtually excluding reason. When anyone makes the least attempt to bring some reason back into the theatre, its champions scream that they want to abolish the emotions.'[15]

But of all the many occasions when Brecht referred to the question of the emotions, he was at his most pungent in the *Messingkauf Dialogues*, the apparently informally written, witty, and extremely profound exposition of his dramatic ideas, in which the part of The Philosopher is closest to Brecht

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

[11] *Brecht on Theatre* (see note 3 above), p. 14.

[12] *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 23.

[13] Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater*, vol. I, Frankfurt, 1963, p. 108. I have looked in Brecht's writings for a reference to Coleridge—who defined poetry in such similar terms over a hundred years before as 'a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order'—but found none, which makes the similarity all the more striking.

[14] *Schriften zum Theater*, vol. I, p. 221.

[15] *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 69.

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himself, but in which he also features as The Augsburger. In the Second Night of the *Dialogues*, The Actor at one point asks: 'Does getting rid of empathy mean getting rid of every emotional element?' To which The Philosopher replies: 'No, no. Neither the public nor the actor must be stopped from taking part emotionally; the representation of emotions must not be hampered, nor must the actor's use of emotions be frustrated. Only one out of many possible sources of emotion needs to be left unused, or at least treated as a subsidiary source —empathy.'[16]

And the following exchange from the same source provides a devastating analysis of Esslin's thesis, written some 15 years before he had worked it out.

'Why is it,' asks The Dramaturg, 'that middle class people always reproach the Augsburger with having too little feeling and wishing to eliminate everything emotional in favour of everything rational?

'*The Philosopher*: His use of reason stirred no emotions in their soul. Indeed, their feelings rebelled against him and his reason. They found him far too critical. Yet he wasn't appealing to their reason, but to that of their enemies. . . . His criticism was something practical, and hence immediately emotional too, whereas their idea of criticism was associated with ethics rather than practical matters, and was thus restricted to the emotional sphere. . . .

'*The Dramaturg:* I thought the misunderstanding was just that his objections to empathy in art were taken as objections to feeling in art.

'*The Philosopher:* No, the misunderstanding went deeper than that. In his day the bourgeoisie was always claiming that the rebellious masses were too emotionally confused to see how reasonable the existing order of society was, and accusing the masses' leaders of relying only on cold reason instead of on that emotional life which the people had developed over thousands of years: its religious, moral and family feelings.'[17]

Thus we see that whereas Esslin devised a tortuous and narrowly psychological diagnosis to explain and explain away Brecht's Marxism, Brecht had already made a Marxist analysis of Esslin while happily unaware of his very existence.

Practice

It would be absurd, unnecessary and pretentious even to attempt to give any kind of systematic account of the use of emotion in Brecht's poetry and plays in order to prove that he did not reject it in practice any more than in theory. But it is important to show how gross are Esslin's specific charges of emotional repression in the poems and plays, and also to discuss briefly one particular scene in a Brecht play which Esslin, and not only Esslin, tends to harp on as an example of Brecht allegedly contradicting in practice what he preached in theory—namely the last but one scene of *Mother Courage*, in which, in the words of the play 'Mother Courage loses her daughter'.

As far as Brecht's poetry is concerned, it is now able to speak for itself in English because of the recent publication of a very substantial selection.[18] To Esslin it obviously did not speak—or perhaps spoke too clearly. Because in order to uphold his thesis that Brecht suppressed overt emotion in it, he is reduced to using an argument that equally well proves that, for instance, John Donne suppresses emotion in his love poems—namely, that 'there is not a single love poem addressed to a named person'.[19] With the appearance of the poems in English there is now the chance to read Brecht's wry and sometimes erotic love poetry for overselves. But for those who do not regard love as the only emotion—or anyway for whom it takes many forms—all Brecht's poetry has a deep emotional content. An outstanding example is 'On the Infanticide Marie Farrar', several times translated; or, for a love poem already translated into English some years ago, 'The Lovers' from *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*.

This last example brings us back to the plays, where Esslin's argument reaches perhaps its lowest point. 'In *The Threepenny Opera*,' he says, 'the love scenes are presented as grotesque parodies of petty bourgeois sentimentality.'[20]

In fact of course, the love scenes in *The Threepenny Opera*, as in *Mahagonny*, are *parodies of* grotesque petty bourgeois sentimentality, and Esslin's criticism is as ridiculous and absurd as it would be to accuse Jonathan Swift of callousness in his *Modest Proposal*, that other great satire from the age that produced the original for *The Threepenny Opera*, Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*.

However, it is *Mother Courage* that is singled out by Esslin, and not only him, for particular attention; namely, that it is a fine play precisely because it is inconsistent with its author's theories—that despite his implacably cold, intellectual intentions it is overwhelmingly moving.

In fact *Mother Courage* and its reception posed a problem for Brecht from the outset. After the first production of the play in Zurich, he himself wrote:

[16] *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, translated by John Willett, Methuen paperback, 1965, p. 57.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 82-3.

[18] *Poems 1913-1956*, ed. John Willett, Methuen, 1976.

[19] Esslin, p. 216.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

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'The world premiere . . . made it possible for the bourgeois press to speak of a Niobe tragedy and of the overwhelming vital strength of the mother animal.'[21]

And despite the fact that his wife, the leading actress of the Berliner Ensemble, Helene Weigel, played the title role in East Berlin, Brecht continued to be misunderstood. 'Deep-seated habits lead theatre audiences to pick on the characters' more emotional utterances and forget all the rest,' he noted.[22]

Thus it is often said that the penultimate scene, in which Mother Courage's daughter, the cripple Kattrin, sacrifices herself by sounding the alarm to arouse the citizens of Halle, is overwhelmingly emotional and therefore conflicts with Brecht's theories. But such criticism, which Brecht himself specifically answered, is only made by those who do not know or who have forgotten that—as we have seen—it was and is not the intention of Brechtian theatre to expel emotion from the stage, only to use it to propel the audience to think and feel beyond the play and its characters, and not to wallow in it.

When Esslin says that Brecht insisted that Mother Courage was a negative character who cannot learn from experience 'but' that 'the audience never fails to be moved by her fate',[23] although he means this ironic 'but' against Brecht, he in fact comes unconsciously very close to what Brecht himself said when challenged to give the play a clearer message: 'Even if Courage learns nothing . . . at least the audience can in my view learn something by observing her.'[24] The difference here is between irony and dialectics—a crucial one symptomatic of many discussions between Marxists and anti-Marxists.

Conclusion

Brecht's life and work is very often rigidly split into different historic and literary phases; for instance, the difference is emphasised between the didacticism of the 1928-33 agitational period and the Popular Front years that followed it, when Brecht somewhat relaxed his new and unfamiliar theoretical ideas for the sake of a broader, easier, more certain propaganda effect.

At the risk of underplaying these differences, I have tried to show how Brecht's attitude to the emotions, conditioned as it initially was by his reaction to Expressionist theatre, was neither repressed nor merely negative and iconoclastic, but that it remained true to his consistent belief in the indivisibility of human nature as, at best, a unity of reason and emotion—a belief which naturally expressed itself in his work differently at different times in accordance with the particular circumstances in which he attempted to accomplish the dialectical task he always set himself as a writer—the provocation, through pleasure, of thought and action.

[21] *Mother Courage*, translated by Eric Bentley, Grove Press paperback, New York, 1966, p. 115.

[22] *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 220.

[23] Esslin, p. 264.

[24] *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 229.

Discussion Contributions on:

Socialist Democracy—Some Problems

Max Adereth

In his interesting article on 'The 20th Congress of the CPSU in retrospect', John Gollan mentions some of the lessons which we can learn from this historic event. Perhaps one of the hardest and yet most useful of such lessons is one which John Gollan touches upon by implication: it concerns the contradictions of socialism. Let's face it, the mere use of the phrase is likely to cause embarrassment among some Marxists. There is no reason why this should be the case. If, as we believe, contradictions are the essence of life, then we must accept the fact that this applies to socialism as much as to any living system. We tended to overlook this elementary Marxist truth in the pre-20th Congress past, partly because Stalinist dogmatism discouraged a healthy critical

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approach to socialist reality, and partly because we expended so much energy exposing the irreconcilable contradictions of capitalism that we shuddered at the thought that socialism, too, has its own contradictions. This wasn't just bad Marxism, it actually weakened our case for socialism. We failed to point out that socialism is superior to capitalism, not because it is supposedly free from contradictions (there is no such system), but because it is *capable of overcoming its own contradictions.*

Contradictions of Socialism

The 20th Congress of the CPSU is the best proof of this. It frankly discussed the *normal* contradictions of Soviet society, and it also had the courage to reveal and criticise the mistakes and the crimes which arose out of some of the contradictions but were in no way inevitable.[1] Despite the initial shock it caused in the Communist movement and the understandable agony which followed from the revelation of so many tragic crimes, the 20th Congress was, above all, a demonstration of the vitality of Soviet socialism. No other régime could have made such a devastating criticism of its own past without running the risk of total collapse. Instead, the denunciation of Stalin and the many corrections which followed it enabled the USSR to grow stronger.

This shows that socialism contains the seeds of its own improvement. Unlike capitalism, which can survive (for a while) only by denying the existence of contradictions in its midst, the socialist system is *compelled,* on pain of self-destruction, to bring its own contradictions to light, as this is a precondition for further development. Under socialism, new problems arise all the time, and this means new battles against routine and obsolete methods.

Central Planning and Democratic Participation

What, then, are the contradictions of socialism? The basic one, as shown by the history of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, is *the contradiction between central planning and wide, democratic participation.* Both are essential ingredients of socialism. Finding the concrete forms by which these two opposites can be dialectically united is the challenge which confronts the builders of a socialist society. Without central planning and control, it is impossible to abolish the anarchy of production which prevails under capitalism; without the people's active involvement at all levels it is impossible to replace the profit motive by the higher incentive of collective effort. This basic contradiction of socialism is determined, as is the case for previous social systems, by the conflict between the level of the productive forces (which always tend to grow very quickly, particularly under socialism) and social relations (which tend to change at a much slower pace). The greatness of scientific socialism lies in its discovery of this law of social evolution, and the strength of a socialist society guided by Marxism is that it can make the necessary adjustments comparatively swiftly and comparatively painlessly.

In our propaganda, we stress that the conflict between the social character of production and the private character of appropriation, which is the scourge of capitalism, disappears under socialism, making way for harmony between social production and social ownership. This is true, but it does not mean that conflicts and contradictions are left behind for ever. What it does mean is that they are no longer irreconcilable, because they do not stem from the opposition between exploiters and exploited.

A distinction must be drawn between antagonistic contradictions, which are a feature of class societies, and the contradictions which arise out of the variety and complexity of social life. Moreover, it would be a mistake to confuse the *essence* of socialist social relations (which is fairly stable) and the *forms* which they take (these must evolve continuously in order to keep abreast of the productive forces). In essence, Soviet people are the collective owners of their means of production—they are in control. No conflict here. However, the way in which the control is exercised, and in particular the precise relationship between planning at the top and initiative from below demands constant review.

In the early days of Soviet power, both the effects of the Civil War and the country's technological and cultural backwardness made it imperative to put the emphasis on centralism. This continued to be necessary in the 30s because of the capitalist encirclement and the Fascist threat, but already, the success of the Five-Year Plans was creating the conditions for greater popular initiative, as shown for example by the Stakhanovites. As time went on, the higher level reached by the productive forces, itself an outcome of

[1] One should not confuse the mistakes made by individuals and the contradictions existing in reality. The mistakes which occurred in the Soviet Union were due to a lot of reasons, some of them psychological (such as Stalin's intolerance or Beria's ambition), some cultural, etc., but, in the last instance, the objective basis of all mistakes is the existence of real contradictions in society. The art of politics consists in the timely and accurate detection of these contradictions so as to prevent them from leading to mistakes and to crimes. It is an extremely difficult art.

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good, centralised leadership, demanded an extension of democracy. By the time of the 20th Congress, it had become an objective necessity for Soviet society to do away with Stalin's bureaucratic methods in order to go forward instead of standing still. The more socialist the system, the greater the amount of democracy it needs. Yet at no time does central planning cease to be important as a means of combating one-sidedness. This dialectical contradiction should not surprise Marxists. The aim is not the utopian attempt to abolish one of the two aspects, but rather to seek the concrete ways in which they can be reconciled. This cannot be achieved without tension.

The Danger of Bureaucracy

The main danger which flows from the basic contradiction of socialism is the danger of bureaucracy. Lenin was well aware of this danger and repeatedly warned against it. It is wrong to assume that it was exclusively due to Russia's backwardness. In fact, it is a danger for all socialist societies, as central planning requires a group of people to administer the economy on behalf of society, i.e. bureaucrats. (Marx and Lenin were realistic enough to demand, not the impossible abolition of officials, but that they should be subject to recall and should not be paid more than other skilled workers.)

All social systems have their bureaucrats who merely implement the will of the ruling class. What is new under socialism is that the number of people who are called upon to act as managers, administrators, etc., grows enormously. This, in itself, shows the democratic trends released by socialism, but it also carries the danger that those entrusted with responsibility may cut themselves off from their fellows and become a law unto themselves. This is the subtle process by which officials are transformed into 'bureaucrats'. There are no easy ways of preventing this, except vigilance, extension of democracy and strict adherence to socialist legality. One of the great merits of the 20th Congress of the CPSU is to have spelt this out with the utmost clarity.

Anti-Soviet propaganda, both from the right and from the 'left', depicts the USSR as being run by heartless bureaucrats (though this '1984' nightmarish picture is a more accurate description of state monopoly capitalism!). Two mistakes should be avoided in dealing with this argument. One is to dismiss it as untrue simply because it comes from the class enemy, the other is to adopt a crestfallen, apologetic attitude, accompanied by the assurance that we in Britain will do things differently. The correct answer, in my view, is not to deny that there are bureaucrats in the Soviet Union, but to point to the very real safeguards that Soviet society provides against them.[2] We should also explain the difference between bureaucracy under capitalism and under socialism.

In a capitalist society, bureaucrats draw their strength from the fact that they serve an exploiting class. Their removal involves a transfer of power, a revolution. However, the removal of bureaucrats in a socialist society is both much easier and much more difficult (a dialectical paradox!). It is easier because the building of a new system of production relations is not involved; it is more difficult because it cannot be achieved at one stroke and depends, for its success, on the people's increased political and cultural level. It is the task of an entire historical generation, perhaps of even more than a single one.

At the time of the recent unrest in Poland, the *Observer* wrote:

> "Popular feeling appears to be expressed and conveyed mainly through factory party cells. It is as if all the propaganda about the workers' state, all the Marxist terms debased through years of official and bureaucratic usage, have suddenly recovered their real meaning" (24/1/71).

I do not know what the writer of this report was trying to prove, but I think he has seen the crux of the matter, namely that in a socialist society, what is needed is to give "their real meaning" to the concepts which are already accepted. It isn't a question of a new set of values, but of the actual values of society being applied in full. It's a struggle to bridge the gap between theory and practice, between proclaimed democracy and effective democracy. This is impossible under capitalism because of the basic clash between genuine democracy and the interests of the monopolists. Under socialism, it is neither easy nor automatic, as we have learnt to our cost, but it can be done. It must be done because socialism cannot thrive without democracy. The people's ownership of the means of production (socialism) simply demands people's control (democracy). The 20th Congress was right to reassert this Leninist view.

Leading Role of Communist Party

Other contradictions of socialism arise out of

[2] Isaac Deutscher, despite his admiration for Trotsky, is honest enough to admit: "Soviet managers have not only to acknowledge that all shares belong to the nation, but to profess that they act on the nation's behalf. . . . Whether they are able to keep up this pretence or not depends solely on political circumstances. . . . In other words, bureaucratic domination rests on nothing more stable than a state of political equilibrium." (*The Unfinished Revolution*, O.U.P., 1967, p. 56.)

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the continued existence of the state and even of a limited form of alienation. Neither of these vanishes overnight. They "wither away". Lack of space prevents full discussion of these aspects. It also prevents discussion of the contradictions which belong to the specific situation created by the existence of socialism in one country, and then in a group of countries, surrounded by capitalist states. These include the conflict between vigilance against real spies and saboteurs (backed by the Nazis in the 30s and by the CIA today) and the need for full discussion of all views, including anti-socialist views; the difference between deeds and opinions; the distinction between administrative and political measures against dissidents, etc. No doubt other comrades will have plenty to say on such topics, in addition to John Gollan's pertinent remarks. I should like to end my own contribution by pointing to one of the ways in which the basic contradiction affects us here in Britain. I have in mind the need to reconcile the leading role of the Communist Party with the requirements of left unity, or, to put it differently, the dialectical contradiction between the concept of vanguard leadership and that of a mass party with its ears close to the ground. Nor is this music for the socialist future. It is a problem we have to tackle right now, as part of our strategy of socialist revolution. One of the weaknesses of *The British Road to Socialism* as it stands is that it is too vague on this issue. This was unavoidable 25 years ago, when *The British Road* was first written, as we were breaking new ground and had little practical experience to fall back upon. The experience we have accumulated since then should enable the Commission appointed to re-draft the Party Programme to grapple successfully with these topics. No doubt it will show convincingly and in detail how we Communists envisage our leading role (as something we *win* through hard work and the spreading of our scientific theory), our relationship to the left, and more particularly to the Labour Party, our stand on what is now known as "pluralistic democracy", the distinction we draw between democracy as understood by Marxists and the numerous varieties of bourgeois liberalism, etc., etc. The movement will certainly grow stronger as the party collectively deepens its understanding of these and related issues.

Mark Harrison

In his opening article John Gollan comments on the achievements of socialism in the USSR, and also on the ways in which Stalin's domination gravely undermined these developments. In the light of this I would like to comment on some implications for Soviet history, and for us today.

Consequences of Stalin's Domination

In the generation of Stalin's leadership (between 1929 and 1953) the Soviet *economy* went through an industrial transformation that took three generations in the advanced capitalist economies. This was achieved through a centralised, hierarchical planning system. But in the course of the breakthrough certain unplanned effects arose, some of which have lingered to the present day.

The 1930s saw an economic and demographic disaster in agriculture, which arose from the forcing of the pace in the collectivisation of the peasantry.[1] In industrial construction forcing the pace resulted in over-employment and years of rapid inflation. Over-ambitious planning and lack of rationality in intersectoral balance resulted in many half-finished projects and in new factories standing idle for lack of raw materials. The most vital planned goals were achieved, but at heavy cost in other respects—costs which leading Soviet historians now consider to have been avoidable.[2]

In addition, the mass organisations of workers and peasants were subordinated to the party, and the party to the state, a process which as John Gollan says led to loss of democratic involvement in higher-level decisions.[3] Where mass initiatives broke through, they had interesting side effects: the Stakhanov movement greatly boosted labour productivity, but disrupted financial planning and led to wage and price inflation. Mass mobilisation in the service of the repressions led to the loss of many thousands of vital technical cadres, who found

[1] As John Gollan stresses (*Marxism Today*, Jan. 1976, p. 16). But earlier he reproduces the myth that "the main source of capital for expansion came from agriculture" (p. 10). Recent work by Soviet historians have refuted this idea. See Michael Ellman, "Did the Agricultural Surplus Provide the Resources for the Increase in Investment in the USSR during the First Five Year Plan?", *Economic Journal*, Dec. 1975, an evaluation of A. A. Barsov, *Balans stoimostnykh obmenov mezhdu gorodom i derevnei*, Moscow 1969.

[2] See A. A. Barsov, *op. cit.*, p. 96; V. P. Danilov, "Osnovnye itogi i napravleniya izucheniya istorii sovetskogo krest'yanstva", in *Problemy agrarnoi istorii sovetskogo obshchestva*, Moscow 1971, pp. 243-247. But it is not only a matter of hindsight; those economists and technicians who at the time foresaw the consequences of administrative haste were repressed.

[3] *Marxism Today*, Jan. 1976, p. 12.

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themselves the scapegoats for mass frustrations in the conditions of working life.

If one looks at the development of Soviet *ideology* one is again struck by its contradictory character. The Stalin era saw the rise of mass literacy and a mass culture based on technical, trade union and political educational institutions, and on Marxism as the dominant political ideology (i.e. all actions of the Soviet state were legitimised in terms of Marxism, or concealed). But Marxism itself took on a dogmatised character, to which Stalin made his particular contribution.[4]

The mass culture, through which the socialist aspirations of the working people were expressed, was shot through with a cult of Stalin's personality, i.e. a set of ideological relations which linked the members of the working class, peasantry and intelligentsia not collectively with each other but individually with Stalin. Dogmatic Marxism was transmitted and reproduced through these ideological links.

At the level of *political power*, the Stalin era was characterised by tremendous mass mobilisations. But these were not mobilisations around the debate on fundamental policy questions in the party and Soviets. One mobilisation built the industrial economy, spurred by ambitious goals but shackled by their lack of correspondence with real possibilities. A second mobilisation, both helped and hindered by Stalin's "strategic genius", smashed the Nazi war machine. A third mobilisation was directed towards the mass repressions, of which Medvedev describes the two-way character: repression was not simply directed by higher-level organs, but was stimulated and inspired by them[5] to the point that mass initiative became uncontrollable, and waves of denunciations by individuals and lower-level organs in turn stimulated the zeal of the security bosses. In the outcome, those who suffered most consistently were Stalin's most devoted cadres in the party, state and above all the security apparatus.[6]

Stalinism as an Instrumental Ideology

In explaining these developments an important area of study is that of the ideological relations of Stalinism, from which I would pick out an instrumental approach to theoretical and political practice. An instrumental approach is one which sees the masses as the object of history, not as the "makers of history", i.e. as manipulable *instruments* which a dominant force (i.e. the party or state) can use to achieve its planned goals.

In the Soviet economy working people were seen as instruments for fulfilling plans, not for deciding which plan to choose. Their mass organisations were seen as instruments of compulsion—the theory of trade unions as the "transmission belt" which relayed ideas and orders to the masses. Planning targets were used as instruments of mass mobilisation, and not as means to a rational allocation of resources.

At the level of ideology, authoritarian concepts of education sought to imprint those axioms authorised by the "greatest thinker of all time" on the blank pages of the mass mind.[7] These axioms were used to justify everything from Lysenko's "genetics" to corrective labour camps where millions learnt the "dignity of productive labour" in exhaustion and death.

Because the masses were seen as passive, unreliable, infiltrated everywhere by "enemies of the people", ideological stability and conformity had to be imposed in all areas of science and culture through the cult of Stalin's personality.

I think that this instrumental character of Stalinism requires emphasis because it brings us closest to the material explanation of the character of political power and Stalin's domination.

The cult of personality was not simply created by Stalin. It rose on the basis of a working class exhausted and decimated by the cost of winning state power: after three years of world war, a breathing space of 1917-18 and then the intervention of the armies of 21 countries. The consequent famines, the chronic unemployment and deprivations of the 1920s, the bitter factional disputes and their brutal resolution in 1927-29—all this led into the forced collectivisation and the onset of the Five Year Plans, during which the exhausted ranks of the working class that had made the revolution were immensely swollen by millions of raw recruits from the countryside, totally lacking experience of collective activity.

If I would make a criticism of John Gollan's historical account, it is that he does not adequately emphasise the material position of the working class

[4] Reference is made to his theory of the harmony of the base and superstructure of socialist society, of the trade unions as the transmission belts of Soviet power, of the monolithic party and its domination of other tendencies, and of the intensification of the class struggle as socialism becomes stronger and its enemies weaker. Together these represent a peculiar combination of economism and sectarianism.

[5] Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, London 1972, pp. 306-307, 350-354, 402-412.

[6] Roy Medvedev, *op. cit.*, Ch. VI.

[7] "How are we to educate (certain comrades) in Marxism-Leninism? I think that systematic reiteration and patient explanation of so-called 'generally known' truths is one of the best methods of educating these comrades in Marxism". J. V. Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR.*, Peking 1972, p. 9.

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as a precondition of Stalinism.[8] The late Isaac Deutscher always tried to make this relation.[9] It is interesting too,, that Roy Medvedev relates Stalinist revivals and tendencies in the USSR today to the material position of working people who find increasing problems in coping with a more complex, cost-conscious and skill-conscious economy which seems beyond their control; frustrated and exhausted they seek to appeal to some higher authority to settle accounts on their behalf, which will issue orders and directives and get things done.[10]

The point of lasting significance, however, is that the energies and initiatives of the Soviet working class of 1930 (as also today) were not exhausted, and the working class did not and could not become a mere instrument of state policy (this poses an *historical possibility* that a different leadership might have directed these energies to a different outcome). In the event, Stalin's leadership, and the instrumental approach which it embodied, did not simply solve existing problems, but in the course of their solution created new ones. For this ideology called forth uncontrollable responses. Partly they amplified the Stalinist mobilisation and swelled the flood of denunciations and arrests. Partly they resisted it, in particular in agriculture, with disastrous consequences. Moreover, those leaders who generated this ideology were subject to it themselves. Respectful towards Stalin, sectarian and suspicious towards the masses, convinced of their own place in history, they were unable to see the consequences of their own actions either as evidence of their justification, or as the malicious activity of "enemies". They saw their policies as directed in the best interests of socialism.

In other words, an instrumental ideology cannot itself be used instrumentally—precisely because it is believed. Above I suggested that an instrumental ideology is one which sees the masses as instruments whereby a dominant force (i.e. the party or state) can achieve planned goals. The result was that the dominant force was neither the party nor the state but Stalin, and that, because of the intervention of the masses, the goals achieved were not always those planned.

That is, Stalinism did not work; though I think that there are better reasons for rejecting it, such as feelings of comradeship for those who suffered under Stalin, and of understanding for those who turn away from socialism today because of this aspect of its past and present.

Political Power under Socialism

Following the 20th Congress of the CPSU Togliatti raised his question whether or not "certain forms of degeneration" had accompanied the achievements of working class power. Following the further revelations of the 22nd Congress, Thorez suggested that one could not speak of working class power under Stalin because of the absence of working class participation in political decisions.[11] These questions have never been satisfactorily resolved.

In one sense the state apparatus acquired a high degree of bureaucratic autonomy from the working class, which it retains to some degree today, while the forms of its operation have changed. On the other hand it never began to acquire the unified, class-conscious character of Trotsky's "bureaucratic caste"; it has remained bound to the working class through Marxism and divided within by personality cults and specialist rivalries. It lacks the class imperatives of the capitalist state, and its domination over society is limited by "determining" ideological constraints.[12]

The problem can be put as follows. Let us say that we reject economistic Marxism (i.e. that the forms of state power always correspond automatically with the economic basis of society). Under capitalism the relationship between the state and the monopoly bourgeoisie can be democratic; and we know that bourgeois democracy is something real, struggled for and won by the organised labour movement. The relationship can also be bureaucratic or fantastic. Under socialism the relationship between the state and the working class can also vary. We know that neither the abolition of monopoly capital nor the existence of Soviets guarantees socialist democracy.

We can theorise about the preconditions of bureaucratic relations under both capitalism and socialism. As Marxists we can theorise about the dynamics of fascist regimes, the role of different sections of the monopoly bourgeoisie, middle strata and working class. We can say something about the goals of such regimes: external aggression, and the destruction of the labour movement's autonomy within by means of nationalist militarism, racism and direct repression.

Today we can see the Soviet achievement. But *as*

[8] He writes (p. 9): "The start of the problem of the cult would appear to be that Stalin, and the leadership of the party associated with him, took political decisions at critical moments in complete variance with Lenin's approach".

[9] Isaac Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution*, Oxford 1968, pp. 29-30.

[10] Roy Medvedev, *Kniga o sotsialisticheskoi demokratii*, Amsterdam-Paris 1972, p. 53.

[11] *L'Humanité*, Nov. 22, 1961.

[12] "The economic base '*determines*' ('in the last instance') *which* element is to be *dominant* in a social formation. . . ." Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, Harmondsworth, 1969, p. 254.

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Marxists we can say hardly anything about the dynamics of state power under socialism. In what sense—economic, ideological or political—was there working class power under Stalin? What were the political consequences, and how deep rooted are they still today?

To ask these questions is not to denigrate the sovereignty of the Soviet people. Its achievements have been won with great struggle, and at great cost. But we have yet to understand their true significance.

As Marxists we are supposed to learn from history—in order to see the present as it is, and to change the future. Until we do this we shall fail, in small and large ways, not least because we shall fail to carry others with our arguments. The discussion which John Gollan has opened is long overdue; but his contribution has opened many doors, and will be seen as a substantial and positive step.

Bob Morrison

British Imperialism is in deep crisis. Momentous and indeed unique developments within the British labour movement are taking place before our very eyes. The cogent need of the hour is for a correct Marxist analysis giving both leadership and unifying all that is best in the labour movement, including a self-critical examination of the role of our Communist Party in winning that unity.

But Communist leadership does not come simply from our knowledge of Marxism. It comes from our ability to correctly apply it to the specific conditions of Britain, to the specific problems confronting the majority of the British people and above all to the problems confronting the British working class. Failure to apply Marxism correctly means that despite our efforts, our Party will continue to stagnate.

The Communist National Congress met in November 1975—an event of some significance to all concerned with the British working class movement, more so with the current momentous problems. A few weeks later *Marxism Today*, the theoretical journal of our Communist Party calls for "a far reaching discussion" not—almost unbelievable—on the decisions of the recent National Congress but:

> "to review in retrospect the decisions and effects of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union".

At such a time for the Communist Party to hold "a far reaching discussion" on the so obviously divisive questions of the 20th Congress of CPSU and on current matters of democracy within the Soviet Union is unworthy of Communist leadership assuming that the initiative for such a discussion came from the Executive Committee.

Stalin's Role

"Marxism requires the truth" about the repressions in the Soviet Union states John Gollan in the January *Marxism Today*. I wholeheartedly agree! I agree further that the absence of it leaves the field wide open to the enemies of the Soviet Union. But it does even more than that! It leaves the field wide open also to subjective un-Marxist one sided analysis—like that of John Gollan—which refuses to look at a man's whole life—ignores the great theoretical and practical contribution that Stalin made and tends to put every problem, crime and repression down to him whilst every advance was made despite his evil influence.

By 1917 Joseph Stalin, at the age of 38, had spent nine years in prison or exile. Up to that time his greatest theoretical contribution was the working out of the Marxist solution of the national question, which insisted on the right of small nations to secession if they desired it. Appointed Commissar of the Nationalities at the onset of the revolution, it was he who was sent to Finland to give to the Finnish people their right to independence. "No one else than Stalin" said Lenin "would have been trusted by the different nationalities".

Marxism and the National and Colonial Question by Joseph Stalin is essential reading for all students of Marxism. Particularly so for British Communists at the moment with the development of the national problems. Joseph Stalin was appointed by the Political Bureau of the Bolshevik Party "in charge of the uprising". The decision of the Congress of Soviets to form a government, on that historic day of October 27, 1917, was signed by Lenin as Chairman of the Council and Stalin as Chairman for the Affairs of the Nationalities.

He was appointed General Secretary of the Soviet Party in 1922, a position he held till his death. By the following year (i.e. 1923) John Gollan claims that the seeds of the future repressions were sown. He states and I quote:

> "it was in this period of 1923 to 1930 that the Party, partly through circumstances but also because of Stalin's rigid thought on the Party, became excessively centralised and discussions of fresh developments were curtailed. This led to stultification of thought with schematic Marxism replacing creative Marxism but also in creating conditions where mass repressions in the name of security could have a certain plausibility." (*Marxism Today*, January, p. 11)

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Elsewhere the impression is given (see p. 7 of the same *Marxism Today*) that the tendency was for internal party democracy to end with Lenin's death. In making this point Gollan compares Lenin's handling of the Trotsky problem with that by Stalin.

Stalin and Inner-Party Democracy

Let's examine the above. At the 14th Congress in 1925 to a demand for the expulsion of Trotsky, Stalin on behalf of the majority of the Executive stated their opposition to such expulsion as follows:

> "we know that the bloodletting method—and they demanded blood—was dangerous, contagious; today you lop off one; tomorrow another; the day after tomorrow a third—what will we have left in the Party."

On collective work Stalin said:

> "The Plenum is the supreme organ—that is sometimes forgotten—and it calls its leaders to order when they begin to lose their balance. The Party cannot be led except collectively. Now that Ilich is not with us it is silly to dream of such a thing; it is silly to talk about it."

Contrary to the inference that there was a lack of internal democracy Trotsky's views were both widely discussed and voted on. The newspapers often devoted whole pages to his viewpoint up to and including the period of the 15th Congress in 1927. Indeed a referendum of the whole Party membership was held in 1927 on the conflicting views of Trotsky and that of the Party line with an overwhelming vote in support of the latter.

Assigning Responsibility

The facts are that John Gollan does not know at what period or when the wrong methods of work developed within the Soviet Party leadership. Neither do I. This is a problem for Soviet historians who alone have access to the necessary information.

But what all Communists should know is that in the creation of the Soviet Union a small handful of leaders had to carry tremendous burdens. Miracles were achieved that would have defied lesser mortals. For their endurance, courage, sacrifice, leadership and eventual success the overwhelming majority of mankind owe a debt of eternal gratitude. And among that handful of leaders anyone capable of intellectual honesty must agree with the sentiments of one of them namely Comrade Kirov, who just prior to his assassination by counter-revolutionaries in 1933 stated that the figure of Stalin "stood out in all its gigantic proportions".

We cannot permit and it is wrong to put every crime or repression down to Joseph Stalin. That there developed a certain degeneracy among some Soviet leaders including Joseph Stalin is undoubtedly true.

That lesser but similar characteristics of leaderships developed in some other socialist countries is also unfortunately true. But for that those leaders alone are responsible.

Even in parties like ours wrong methods developed. We cannot blame Joseph Stalin for the support we gave to the Cominform resolution on Yugoslavia. Nor can we blame him for the fact that the Commission on Inner Party Democracy in 1957 drew our attention to the position that the National Executive could be more self-critical and that, in the past, party views and discussion had not been given sufficient space in our press "nor developed with sufficient freedom".

Khrushchev's Attitude

John Gollan states that Khrushchev's portrayal of Stalin's conduct of the war is "suspect". Johnny is too mild. It was downright lies and exaggerated rubbish. That this was so is no longer a matter of contention within the Soviet Union. Furthermore many of his statements whilst General Secretary showed a similar tendency for exaggeration. And I suggest that, until there is an authentic history by Soviet historians, Khrushchev's statement at the 20th Congress blaming everything on Stalin and ignoring the reponsibility also of other leading comrades including himself may likewise suffer from a certain exaggeration and be suspect.

Why is this? Listen to Khrushchev speaking at the 18th Congress in 1939—that is after the mass repressions of which he admitted he was fully aware.

> "The Ukrainian people proclaim with all their heart and soul, with utmost affection and devotion—'Long live our beloved Stalin'."
>
> "The people are more united than ever in their loyalty to the Bolshevik Party, to their leader and teacher Comrade Stalin".
>
> "Comrades, the 18th Party Congress, the historic precepts of our great Stalin arm the people of the Soviet Union; arm the working people of the whole world with a mighty weapon in the struggle for Communism. Comrade Stalin's doctrine of the Socialist State in a Capitalist encirclement; the profound new ideas that Comrade Stalin's report has introduced into the question of the Soviet intelligentsia are a great contribution to the treasure store of Marxism-Leninism and mark a higher stage in the development of Leninism".
>
> "Long live the towering genius of all humanity, the teacher and guide who is leading us victoriously to Communism, our beloved Comrade Stalin".

How about that! And that from one who was aware of the crimes and repressions for which he at the 20th Congress put full responsibility on Stalin

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